

**SPECIAL
NFL
PREVIEW**

PREDICTIONS & TEAM BY TEAM ANALYSIS

SPORT

**Q&A
EMMITT
SMITH**

1995 NFL & COLLEGE

FOOTBALL PREVIEW



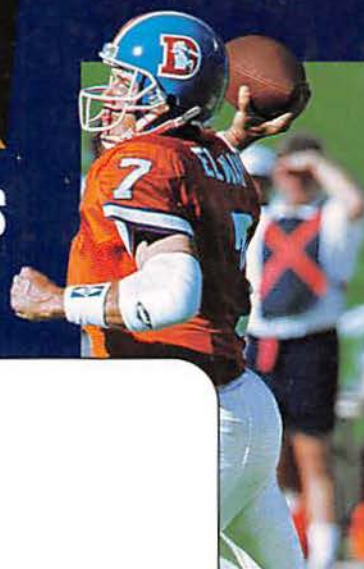
STEVE YOUNG



EMMITT SMITH



JEFF HOSTETLER



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ELWAY**

SPORT PREDICTIONS

NFL DIVISION CHAMPS

NFC EAST	DALLAS
NFC CENTRAL	DETROIT
NFC WEST	SAN FRANCISCO
AFC EAST	NEW ENGLAND
AFC CENTRAL	PITTSBURGH
AFC WEST	LOS ANGELES

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SAN FRANCISCO

AUGUST 1995



A man on a horse, wearing a cowboy hat and a dark jacket, is leading two pack horses through a river. The horses are carrying packs on their backs. The scene is set at dawn or dusk, with a soft, hazy light in the background and silhouettes of evergreen trees. The water is splashing around the horses' legs.

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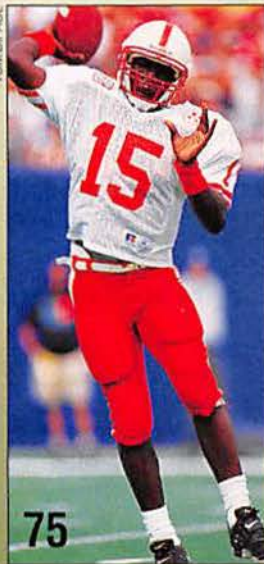
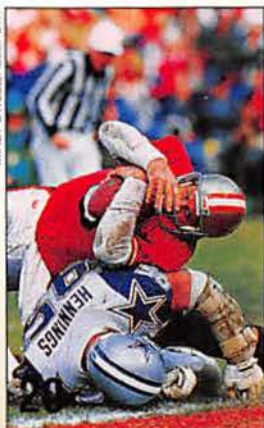


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Saturday, Sunday, Holiday.

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SPORT
AUGUST 1995

TOM DIPACE



Later this month, the USA Basketball Selection Committee will have to choose, from a long list of qualified athletes, 12 players who will comprise Dream Team III, which will compete in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Narrowing the list of established superstars won't be easy for head coach Lenny Wilkens and his staff, so we took it upon ourselves to help out. Where to start?

"First, you've got to pick Michael, Magic, Wilt and whoever else wants to play from the old days and go from there," says NBC insider Peter Vecsey.

Rest assured, Team Trey will be missing one ingredient prevalent on the previous Dream Team: immaturity.

"The committee is going to make sure those kinds of players aren't on this team—namely, Larry Johnson, Dominique Wilkins and Derrick Coleman," says *Chicago Tribune* columnist Sam Smith, who has closely covered the Dream Team scene. "They don't want players complaining about minutes, taunting Cubans, etc. Not on this team."

With respect to vets Joe Dumars, Reggie Miller and Tim Hardaway, and youngsters Glenn Robinson and Jason Kidd—all of whom are worthy of Team Trey roster spots—we present our 12 choices, in alphabetical order:

1. Charles Barkley

The committee may think twice, but what Barkley wants, Barkley usually gets.

2. Anfernee Hardaway

See Grant Hill.

3. Grant Hill

Though just a youngster, he'd be no token Laettner. The new NBA formula for young star.

4. Magic Johnson

TEAM TREY

He's expressed his desire to play for Team Trey and seems to be laying the groundwork for a '95-'96 comeback to the NBA. "I'm playing as good as I've ever played," affirms Magic.

5. Michael Jordan

Why not? All he has to do is eat Big Macs in his Hanes and Nikes for two weeks to make millions.

6. Shawn Kemp

One of Dream Team II's most popular players in Toronto.

7. Karl Malone

An obvious delivery to Atlanta. The best power forward of all time.

8. Hakeem Olajuwon

Now has U.S. citizenship, but participated in Olympics on a Nigerian national team. Needs grant from IOC.

9. Shaquille O'Neal

Only Dream Team II member who has a roster lock.

10. Scottie Pippen

First to express interest in playing.

11. David Robinson

Check the resume: MVP, admiral, family man, concert pianist...yeah, you can play.

12. John Stockton

Model citizen exemplifies new Dream Team attitude, and how can you pass up the NBA's all-time assist king?

13. Patrick Ewing

OK, Patrick makes 13, but Olajuwon may not be admitted. And as Smith asks, "How can you say no to Patrick if he wants to play?"

—Dan Dieffenbach and Darryl Howerton

IN & OUT

A list of what's in and out of style for the month of July:

IN: MLB home run derby
OUT: NBA slam-dunk contest

IN: Cal Ripken Jr.
OUT: Lou Gehrig

IN: The Ballpark in Arlington
OUT: Three Rivers Stadium

IN: Strawberries 'n' cream
OUT: Darryl Strawberry

IN: The forkball
OUT: The knuckler

IN: Autographs
OUT: "Beat it, kid"

IN: Lenny Wilkens
OUT: Don Nelson

IN: Timber Country
OUT: Larry The Legend

IN: NFL two-a-days
OUT: Hunting and fishing

IN: J.J. Stokes
OUT: John Taylor

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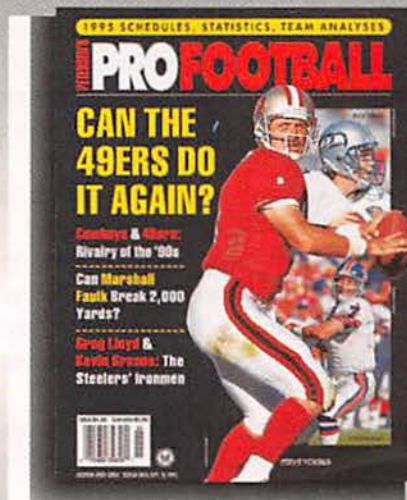
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MURRAY'S NUMBERS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Among the media tastemakers, he is as popular as a no-host bar. So you don't read any tributes to him (OK, except for this one). But for nearly two decades and in four clubhouses, Eddie Murray has been the relentless conscience driving teams to excel.

He's done all right on the field too—enough to merit being lumped with acknowledged modern-era legends like Stargell, Jackson and Schmidt. None of those power-and-presence lads reached 3,000 hits, but Murray will—assuming he gets 70 this season before the next players' strike.

In addition to becoming the 20th player with 3,000 hits, Murray could also become the 16th

to reach 480 homers (he opened 1995 with 458). Thus far, there are only two such parlays (Aaron, Mays) on record; just something to keep in mind when those Hall of Fame ballots arrive in the mail.

Murray also will retire among the all-time top 20 in RBI, at-bats, games and total bases, and also is arguably the greatest first baseman ever (he already holds records for most games and assists at the position). But what cements his legacy is the single-minded purpose with which he plays the game.

Eddie had an "attitude" long before it became a clichéd buzzword for scorning all the garbage on the fringe. He produced, without owing an explanation for how he did it.

In the locker room, he was a nuclear reactor: valuable, but also

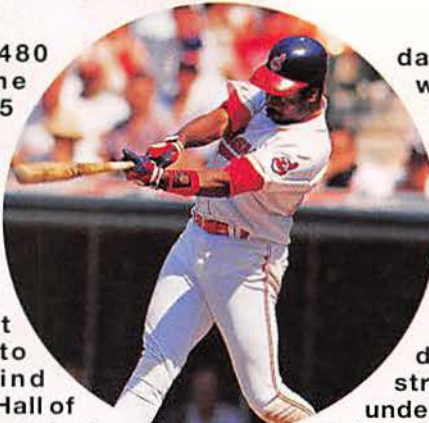
dangerous. Murray always volunteered to take the heat off his teammates, but could also turn that heat on them: His silent, piercing stare had a way of making strained hamstrings suddenly feel better.

Murray's teams drove the September stretch like Secretariat under Turcotte's whip. His Orioles ran five pennant races, and Eddie batted a cumulative .318 in the final months of those seasons. When the 1990 Dodgers went to the wire, Murray gave them .411 work in September.

Most amazingly, he has put in 150-plus games in 15 of his 18 seasons, and two of the misses were called strikes. Legend

has it, those are the only two the aggressive Murray has ever taken with the bat on his shoulder.

—Tom Singer



FORREST SAX

When people looked at the L.A. Dodgers of the 1970s and '80s, often they saw a bullpen of clean-cut and level-headed guys destined for someone's political ticket.

Steve Garvey, Orel Hershisser, Jerry Reuss and Bill Russell could've all been ballot-bound with a bullet. In this group, Steve Sax was the class clown.

So who was the first out of the political closet, in April announcing his candidacy for the California state assembly? Sax, of course, who once became exasperated searching for the sports section in the *Wall Street Journal*.

This is the same guy who announced his intention to "hit the ball 80 percent up the middle, 20 percent to left and the other 20 percent to right."

The 35-year-old outfielder/Republican will retire after this season and try to swap his seat on the A's bench for David Knowles' seat in the assembly, representing a district spanning six Northern California counties. Sax even had his platform in order by April: "Juvenile crime, sensible government regulation of business, Californians' tax burdens."

What, nothing on salary caps?

Word is, Democrats are brawling for the privilege to run against Sax. Why, you ask?

Perhaps because he once declined to buy an array of helium-filled balloons for his kids, asking, "How am I going to get them all in my suitcase?"

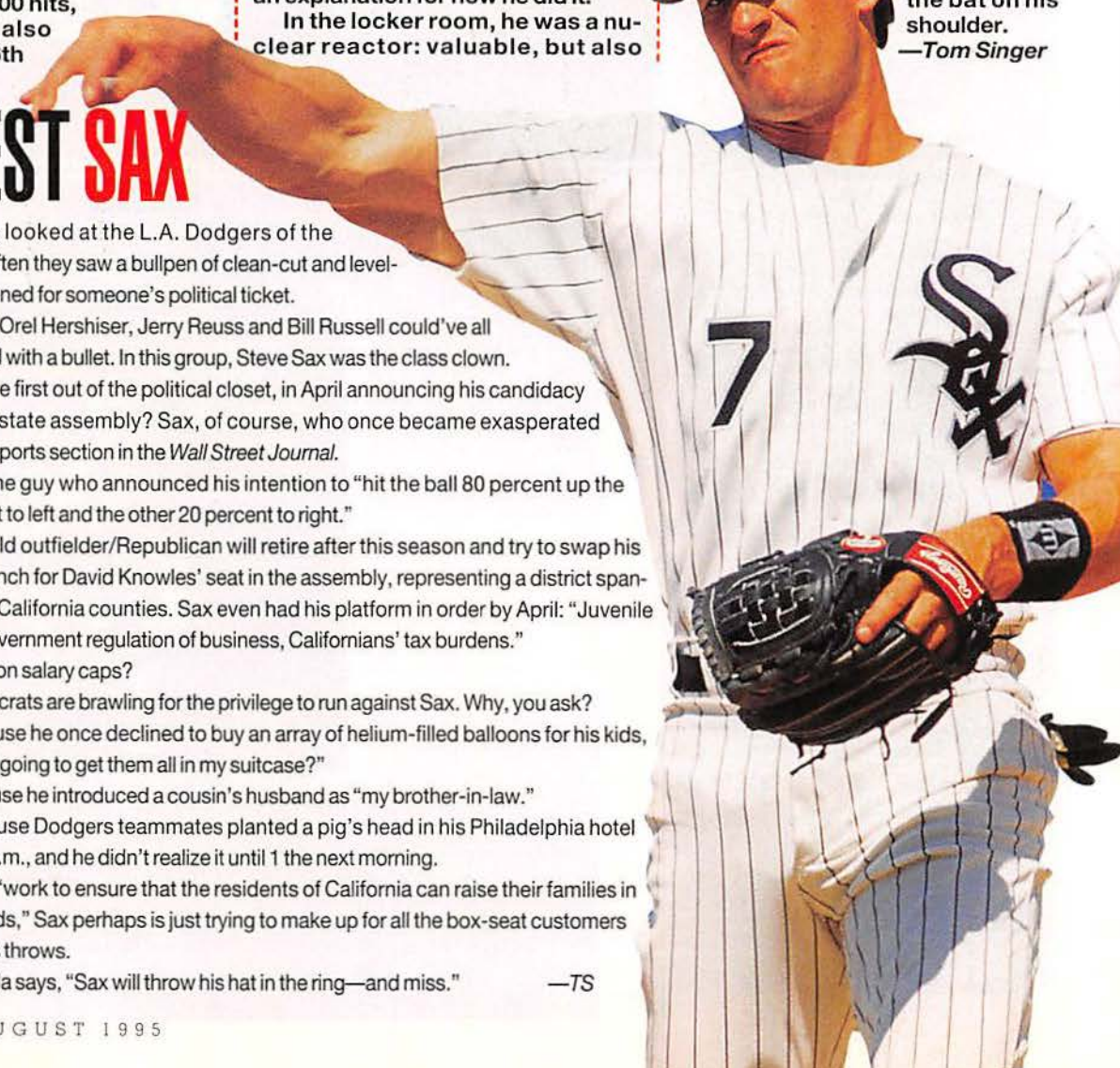
Perhaps because he introduced a cousin's husband as "my brother-in-law."

Perhaps because Dodgers teammates planted a pig's head in his Philadelphia hotel bed one day at 3 p.m., and he didn't realize it until 1 the next morning.

In pledging to "work to ensure that the residents of California can raise their families in safe neighborhoods," Sax perhaps is just trying to make up for all the box-seat customers endangered by his throws.

As Tom Lasorda says, "Sax will throw his hat in the ring—and miss."

—TS





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WHO STOLE THE STOLEN BASES?

Stolen base totals in baseball have dropped dramatically, and the theory going around the batting cages is that teams are making concerted efforts to run less.

The trend began in 1993, coincidentally (or maybe not) when expansion teams were added in Colorado and Florida. One theory behind it states that with more bad pitchers in the league, managers are now playing for the big inning rather than playing for one run.

In the 1980s, Rickey Henderson and Vince Coleman each stole 100-plus bases three times. The only player today who has a chance for 100 is Kenny Lofton—and even he figures to get an occasional red light with Carlos Baerga, Albert Belle and Manny Ramirez batting behind him.

—DH

YEAR	STEALS	AVE. PER TEAM
1992	3,264	125.5
1993	3,263	116.5
1994	2,258	114.5*

*Projected average if season were not interrupted by strike.

THE ULTIMATE FANTASY

Nearing the halfway point of the baseball season, SPORT thought it a good time to unveil its all-time all-star rotisserie team. And you thought your '95 fantasy team was doing well? Check out these digits:

HITTERS	AVE.	HR	RBI	RUNS	SB
C Roy Campanella, '53 Dodgers	.312	41	142	103	4
C Johnny Bench, '70 Reds	.293	45	148	97	5
1B Jimmie Foxx, '32 A's	.364	58	169	151	3
COR Lou Gehrig, '27 Yankees	.373	47	175	149	10
2B Rogers Hornsby, '22 Cardinals	.401	42	152	141	17
MID Joe Morgan, '75 Reds	.327	17	94	107	67
SS Maury Wills, '62 Dodgers	.299	6	48	130	104
3B George Brett, '80 Royals	.390	24	118	87	15
OF Ty Cobb, '11 Tigers	.420	8	127	147	83
OF Babe Ruth, '21 Yankees	.378	59	171	177	17
OF Hack Wilson, '30 Cubs	.356	56	190	146	3
OF Rickey Henderson, '86 Yankees	.267	10	51	119	130
OF Chuck Klein, '30 Phillies	.386	40	170	158	4
ANY Joe DiMaggio, '37 Yankees	.346	46	167	151	3

PITCHERS	W	K	ERA	RATIO	SV
SP Ed Walsh, '08 White Sox	40	269	1.42	0.86	6
SP Jack Chesbro, '04 Yankees	41	240	1.82	0.94	0
SP Christy Mathewson, '08 Giants	37	259	1.43	0.84	5
SP Walter Johnson, '12 Senators	33	303	1.39	0.91	2
SP Bob Gibson, '68 Cardinals	22	268	1.12	0.85	0
SP Sandy Koufax, '65 Dodgers	26	382	2.04	0.86	2
RP Dennis Eckersley, '90 A's	4	48	0.61	0.61	48
RP Bobby Thigpen, '90 White Sox	4	70	1.83	1.03	57
RP Bryan Harvey, '91 Angels	2	101	1.60	0.86	46

RECOMMENDED READING

LEGEND RETURNS

Airborne, by Jesse Kornbluth, Simon & Schuster, (164 pages, \$15.00)

In *Airborne*, biographer Jesse Kornbluth tackles the private side of Michael Jordan. The book incorporates candid interviews with the Bulls' star and offers an enlightening perspective on Jordan.

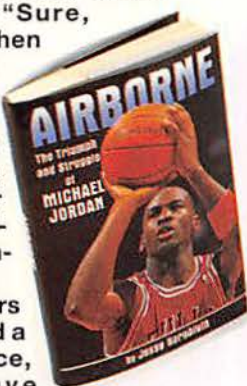
Kornbluth interviewed Jordan before his basketball return, and the book relates the high-running emotions that led to his "retirement." Jordan addresses many issues on which he has remained tight-lipped in the past, including friction among teammates, the demands of being a role model and the gambling allegations that plagued him during the '93 season, when he led the Bulls to their third

consecutive NBA title.

Jordan also speaks openly about his commitments to Nike and other endorsement contracts that have caused what he sees as overexposure: "Sure, there are days when I'm in the mood to live the part, to be 'Michael Jordan,' but those days are becoming fewer and fewer," Jordan says in one interview segment.

Kornbluth gears *Airborne* toward a younger audience, those who have been raised watching Jordan's phenomenal career unfold and want to learn more about the rationale behind his decision-making.

—Constance Loizos



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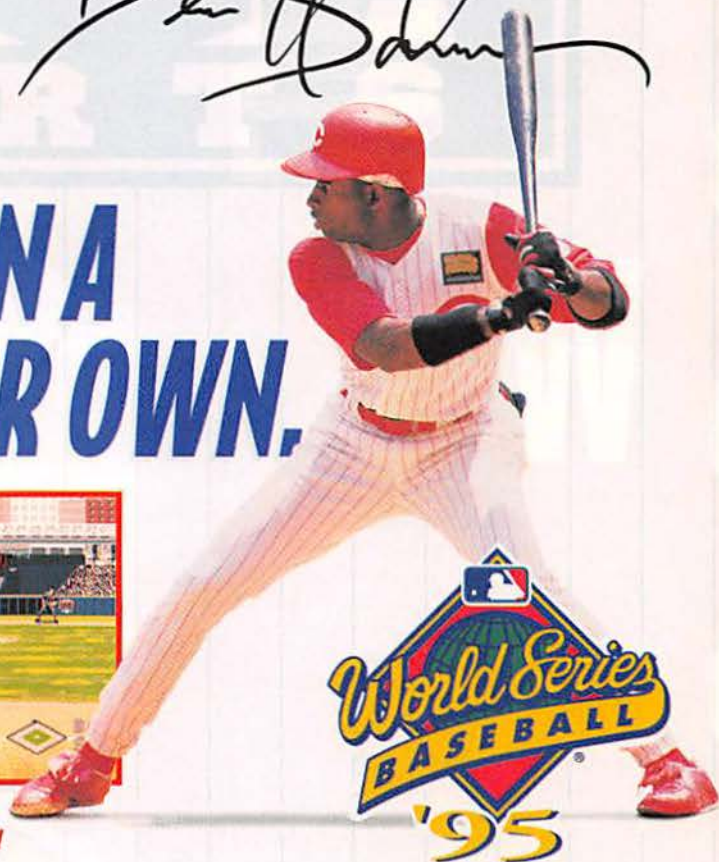
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one on one

Kenny

"Once Ricky Henderson leaves, I might be the No. 1 leadoff hitter"

By George Castle

LOFTON

While eating a steak and cheese sandwich in a downtown Chicago restaurant, Kenny Lofton refuses to acknowledge himself as baseball's best leadoff hitter. His reasoning: Rickey Henderson, though in the twilight of his career, is still playing.

"Once Rickey Henderson leaves, I might be the No. 1 leadoff hitter," the Cleveland Indians' center fielder says. "But Rickey is still the best leadoff hitter in the game. Statistics may be one thing, but Rickey has proven himself. Once I prove myself, maybe I can say that. Right now, I'm still trying to get where he's at."

But modesty can't hide Lofton's awesome stats over the last three years: 196 stolen bases, 326 runs and a .315 batting average. Defensively, Lofton has no peer. He's won two Gold Gloves in as many seasons—and loves to talk about it.

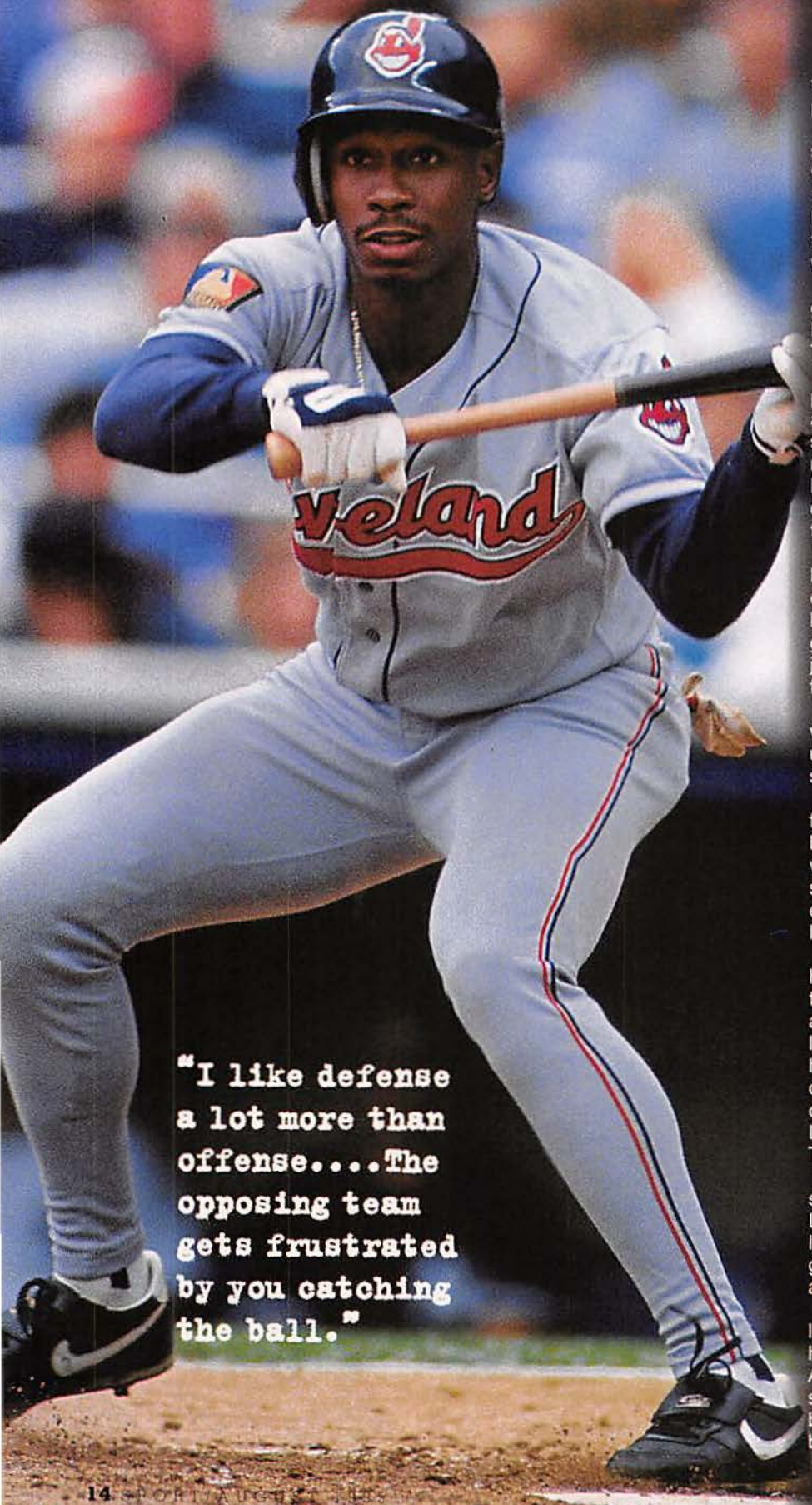
"I like defense a lot more than offense," he says. "There are only certain things I can do on offense. On defense, I can control some people's minds by catching the ball. The opposing team gets frustrated by you catching the ball. It also helps the pitcher out. You make a catch, he'll



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"I like defense a lot more than offense....The opposing team gets frustrated by you catching the ball."

feel more confident throwing that pitch."

Hard to believe, but this is the same Kenny Lofton who originally wanted to be an NBA star. From 1985 to 1989, he played guard for the University of Arizona and was an integral part of the Wildcats team that went to the Final Four in '88.

That same year, however, Lofton gave up his dream of playing in the NBA to pursue a career in baseball. The reason?

"I wasn't given an opportunity to play my style of basketball—run-and-gun, shooting in motion," Lofton says. "I was being someone else. By my junior year, it got a little better, but I felt I should do something else because I wasn't getting the recognition in basketball I should have."

Because of the sudden switch to baseball in 1988, Lofton wasn't drafted until the Houston Astros selected him in the 17th round. He played 48 games at Single-A Auburn, but hit just .214 before returning to Arizona for his senior year.

"I wasn't a quitter. My friends were [at Arizona]," he says of continuing with basketball for one more season.

Once he left organized basketball for good, Lofton thrived in his baseball surroundings, hitting above .300 while averaging 50 steals in two full seasons in the minors, success that earned him a promotion to the big leagues in 1991.

Lofton showed little at the plate, hitting .203 in 74 at-bats that year in the Houston organization, but Indians general manager John Hart loved Lofton's potential as a leadoff hitter. So after two months of talks during the winter of '91, Hart pulled off the steal of the '90s by acquiring Lofton and Dave Rhode for Ed Taubensee and Willie Blair.

"The Astros traded me to the right situation, and I thank them for that," Lofton says. "I was going from one last-place team to another, but I was getting an opportunity to play. That's all I wanted."

Lofton got his chance in Cleveland and made the most of it. In only his third full pro season, he set an American League rookie record by stealing 66 bases in a season. Not bad for a guy who didn't take baseball seriously until his junior year in

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**"It would be
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I'm not going
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"[My performance] was only a surprise to other people, not to me," Lofton says of his immediate success in Cleveland. "I have a goal set, and when I put my mind to it, I'll do it. I let myself know that the future is in front of me."

"Some people learn quicker than others. If guys make that adjustment, they can stay in the game a long time."

Almost immediately, Lofton began cataloging pitchers' moves in order to steal bases, and he is careful not to give away his secrets.

"Some pitchers are harder than others," he says. "I write that in a little book I have. Others who are not as tough, I put that in my mind. If I'm on base, I can pick up their motions, usually after one or two times."

But as great a base stealer as he is, Lofton doesn't think he'll ever break Henderson's single-season stolen base record of 130. "Pitchers have changed. Years ago, it wasn't a big thing for pitchers to worry about the base runner. Now it's the biggest thing."

"It would be very tough to get 100 stolen bases. I'm not going to try. It's like running through a brick wall. I'd be forcing myself on something that's almost impossible."

Lofton, some might argue, doesn't need to dash toward the century mark in stolen bases because of sluggers such as Albert Belle and Carlos Baerga driving him in on a regular basis. It's better that Lofton concentrate on a run at the batting title and convincing baseball writers that a non-slugger such as he should be considered for MVP because of his all-around value to a team. "Baseball fans like players hitting home runs," Lofton says. "But I will never be a Triple Crown winner."

Lofton has plowed his newfound wealth back into his family, building a four-bedroom house in East Chicago for his grandmother, Rosie Person, who recently went blind. She often reminds her grandson of the values she taught him.

"She taught me right and wrong, to respect your elders, keep a level head and don't stray from what you are," Lofton says.

The only straying Lofton does is from first base, prepping to take another base he rightfully claims as his own, dashing straight to the top of baseball's charts. ★

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BY JOHN CZARNECKI

Prince Bledsoe and the Patriots Will Stake Their Claim, But **King** **Young** and the **49ers** Will Still Rule the Land

THE CZAR SAYS ...





THE CZAR'S PICKS

NFC East

Dallas Cowboys 11-5
New York Giants 10-6
Washington Redskins 9-7
Philadelphia Eagles 6-10
Arizona Cardinals 5-11

NFC Central

Detroit Lions 10-6
Chicago Bears 10-6
Green Bay Packers 9-7
Tampa Bay Buccaneers 8-8
Minnesota Vikings 7-9

NFC West

San Francisco 49ers 12-4
Atlanta Falcons 8-8
New Orleans Saints 8-8
St. Louis Rams 4-12
Carolina Panthers 3-13

AFC East

New England Patriots 11-5
Miami Dolphins 10-6
Indianapolis Colts 9-7
Buffalo Bills 7-9
New York Jets 3-13

AFC Central

Pittsburgh Steelers 12-4
Cleveland Browns 10-6
Cincinnati Bengals 7-9
Houston Oilers 5-11
Jacksonville Jaguars 4-12

AFC West

Los Angeles Raiders 10-6
San Diego Chargers 10-6
Denver Broncos 9-7
Kansas City Chiefs 8-8
Seattle Seahawks 5-11

NFC Champs:

San Francisco 49ers

AFC Champs:

New England Patriots

Super Bowl champs:

49ers

Coach of the Year:

Bill Parcells

Most Valuable Player:

Drew Bledsoe

NFC
WEST

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

1

1995 OVERVIEW The accepted thinking in the NFL is that the NFC has been reduced to two teams, Dallas and San Francisco. They are also the two best teams in football, with the defending Super Bowl champs currently owning the edge. Last season, the 49ers purged Dallas twice at Candlestick, and by the time they meet Nov. 12 in Texas Stadium, Deion Sanders will be in uniform. Dallas says it also wants Deion, but our money is on the 49ers—and with Deion, they repeat.

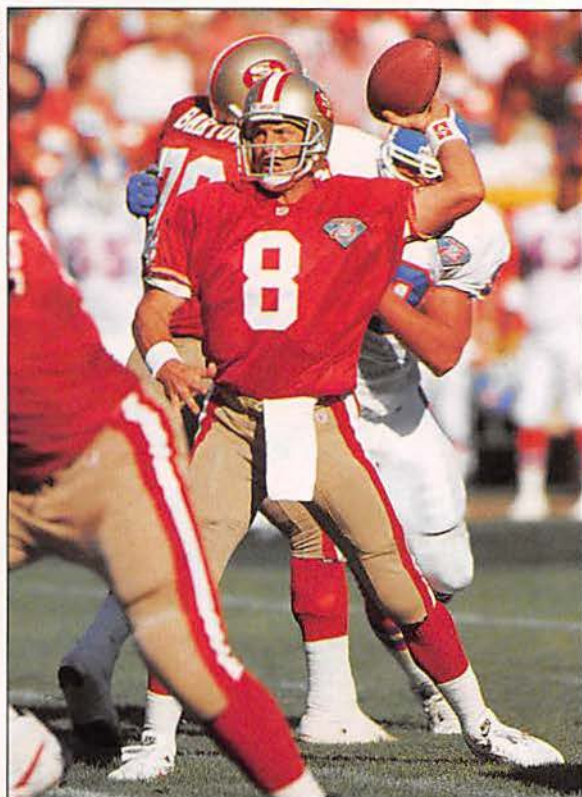
QUARTERBACK Steve Young won a record fourth straight passing title, the first quarterback ever to record four consecutive years with over a 100-plus-point rating. Young led the NFL with 35 touchdown passes and completed a record 70.3 percent of his attempts. But there is a concern. His advisor, Mike Shanahan, has been replaced by Marc Trestman, who failed in his last two stints in the NFL. Shanahan was praised for refining the Bill Walsh system, taking it to another level, as the 49ers scored a league-high 505 points. Trestman's gauge won't be game preparation, but how he adjusts when opponents scheme the 49ers. **Grade: A+**

RUNNING BACKS William "Bar None" Floyd is close to emerging as the game's best fullback, but who's going to replace Ricky Watters? There's Derrick Moore, who admirably replaced Barry Sanders for a few games in '93, or the hometown kid, Derek Loville, who ranks as Oregon's all-time rusher with 3,296 yards. Loville, who wasn't drafted, has spent time with two other teams, mostly as a kick returner. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS Jerry Rice talked about retiring, but why should he when he still owns the football field. By the time he turns 33 in October, Rice will have added to his record 139 touchdowns and probably passed James Lofton's NFL record of 14,004 receiving yards (he needs 730). UCLA rookie J.J. Stokes figures to replace 10-year veteran John Taylor, who must accept a huge pay cut. Tight end Brent Jones is coming off his best scoring season, having finished with nine touchdowns. **Grade: A+**

OFFENSIVE LINE Once again, the 49ers have abundant talent on this unit, although left tackle Steve Wallace and center Jesse Sapolu are nearing the end of their careers. There is so much depth. Sapolu is returning to center, leaving Pro Bowler Bart Oates as a backup. Chris Dalman figures to edge Ralph Tamm at left guard, while the club matched the Rams' offer to right guard Derrick Deese. Harris Barton is the team leader at right tackle. This is the NFL's best line entering the season. **Grade: A**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS The 49ers are loaded up the middle, where Dana Stubblefield and Bryant Young reside. They are the best tackle combination in the NFL against the run, allowing the 49ers to experiment on the outside. Dennis Brown and Todd Kelly, who failed in Charles Haley's elephant role two years ago, could be the ends. Tim Harris may return if he cleans up his act. The 49ers also have pursued Burt Grossman. Ken Norton Jr. again should lead the team in tackles, sitting behind this line. Lee Woodall has



The weight of the world off his shoulders, Young has the gun to lead a Niners repeat.

great instincts at weak-side linebacker, while Gary Plummer plays on enthusiasm and smarts. **Grade: B+**

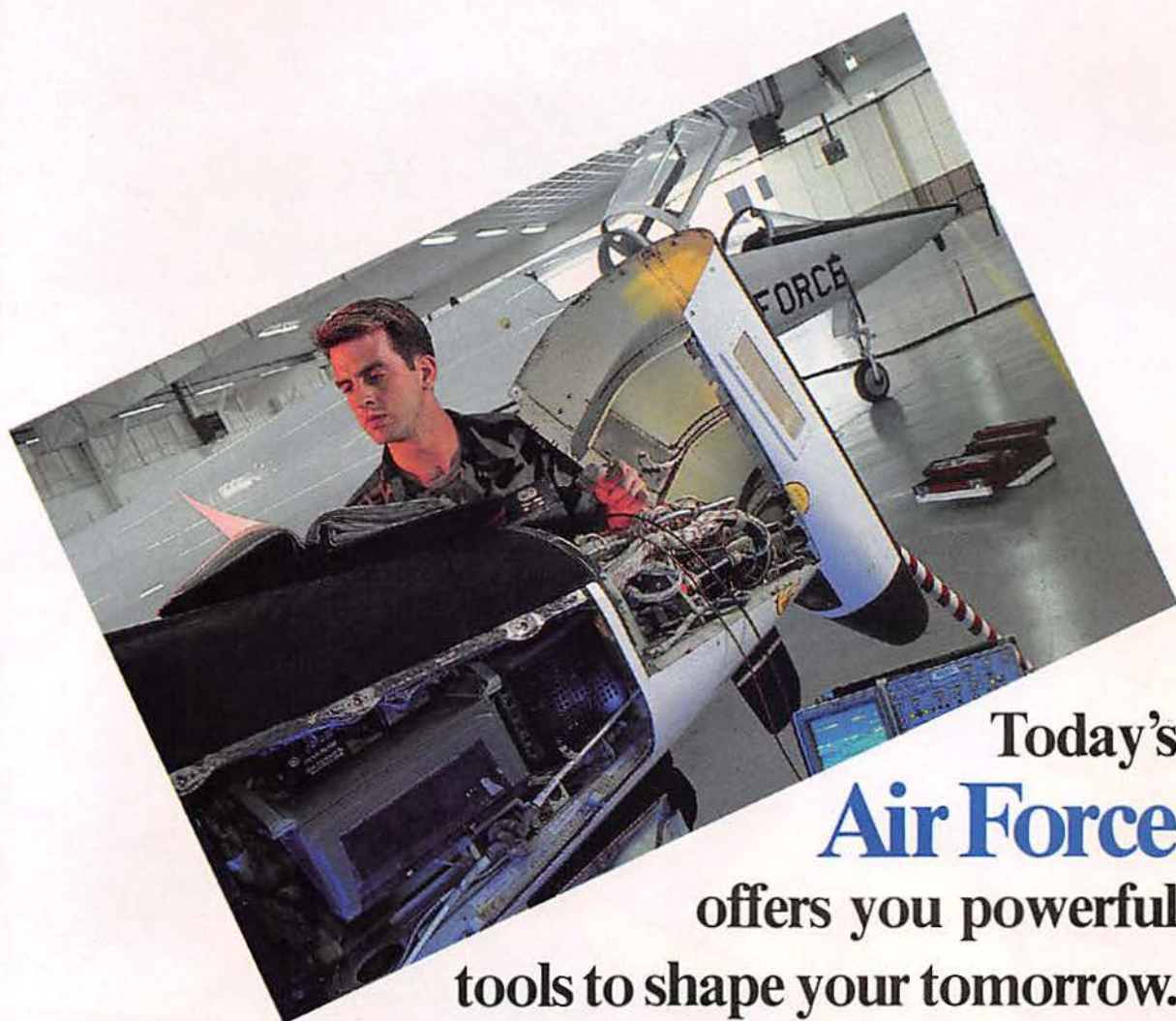
SECONDARY This group could experience the most turnover, based on off-season offers involving both safety Tim McDonald and cornerback Eric Davis. When ex-Ram Marquez Pope received a \$2 million signing bonus, it wasn't to replace Deion Sanders at cornerback. Pope is a better safety. The plan is to free some money here, allowing Sanders (six interceptions) to return once baseball is over. Free safety Merton Hanks (seven interceptions) and backups Michael McGruder and Tyrone Drakeford are safe. **Grade: A**

SPECIAL TEAMS Last year's great draft produced kicker Doug Brien, who figures to improve. Free agency cost the 49ers' special teams dearly, but Clifford Hicks has averaged almost 10 yards a punt return for three different clubs. The gamble is punter Tommy Thompson, who was in camp last summer when he failed to beat out Klaus Wilmsmeyer. **Grade: B-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT George Seifert would have lost his job had the Cowboys won the NFC title in Candlestick Park. Eddie DeBartolo and Carmen Policy will do anything to win, the signing of Deion Sanders being the perfect example. **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED RECORD 12-4





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1995 OVERVIEW In the last two off-seasons, Atlanta has lost two great players, Deion Sanders and Andre Rison, and two very good receivers in Mike Pritchard and Michael Haynes. Still, coach June Jones believes his offense will be better this season. He may be right because the schedule is easier, quarterback Jeff George has adjusted to the run-and-shoot, and the defense has new direction. The Falcons will be better—how much depends on the health of their defense.

QUARTERBACK George figured to have his best season as a pro in the run-and-shoot and he did, passing for 23 touchdowns and 3,734 yards. Despite his great wrist and arm strength, George must improve his decision-making. He forces too many passes, believing he has the arm to overcome a cornerback's speed. He also lacks patience in the big games. George suits the offense, but veteran Bobby Hebert operates the scheme better, and his return ensures the offense won't miss a beat. Perry Klein must wait his turn. **Grade: B+**

RUNNING BACKS Erric Pegram and Tony Smith are gone, but who cares, as long as Craig "Ironhead" Heyward can improve on his 779 yards and seven touchdowns of last season? Ironhead displayed the power and instincts that made him a first-round choice in 1988. He played at 265 pounds and was alcohol-free. Ironhead also caught 32 passes. Ex-Brown Eric Metcalf may line up in the backfield on third down, but he'll primarily be a wide receiver. **Grade: B**

RECEIVERS Metcalf and J.J. Birden figure to replace Rison's production. Metcalf should excel in the run-and-shoot with his speed and moves after the catch. In Cleveland, Metcalf had eight games in which he had 200 yards of total offense from scrimmage. And Birden can go deep; he's averaged 40 yards per catch on 18 touchdown receptions over his career. But the real keys are Terance Mathis and Bert Emanuel. Can they duplicate last year's production? Mathis caught a team-record 111 passes, scoring 11 times, and was the free-agent bargain of '94. Emanuel, a college quarterback, used his smarts and 4.3 speed to grab 46 receptions. **Grade: A**



OFFENSIVE LINE Last year, the Atlanta line allowed only 32 sacks on 666 passing plays, but this year Lincoln Kennedy moves to left tackle despite constant weight problems. Bob Whitfield is the best pass blocker at right tackle. Guard Mike Zandofsky got caught holding 10 times. It's essential that Dave Richards re-signs, although Stan Brock also is a possibility. Center Roman Fortin made everyone forget Jamie Dukes. **Grade: C+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Two linemen, Chris Doleman and Pierce Holt, are coming off injuries. Doleman hated Atlanta last season, so there's no guarantee he wants to return, following foot surgery, for the final year of his contract. Holt's knees are shot, proving his \$7.5 million signing in '93 was a mistake. Chuck Smith and Lester Archambeau show quickness as pass rushers and could be the starters. Nose tackle Moe Gardner has played in 64 straight games. Clay Matthews (18th season), ex-Bill Darryl Talley (13th season) and old reliable Jessie Tuggle (ninth season) can still play. Ohio State linebacker Lorenzo Styles will be Tuggle's backup. **Grade: C**

SECONDARY Rookies Devin Bush and Ronald Davis could make an immediate impact with their speed. D.J. Johnson is solid at right cornerback, where he had five interceptions last season. Left cornerback Anthony Phillips, a 210-pounder, can jam the run and has been timed at 4.4 seconds. Roger Harper returns from a broken forearm, and Kevin Ross provides leadership at strong safety. Bush should be a nickel back. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS Harold Alexander flaked out last season. Ex-Buc Dan Stryzinski's booming punts led to an NFL-low 94 return yards. Scott Tynner, whose kickoffs saved Norm Johnson last year, returns to battle the placekicker. Johnson, though, has converted 52 of his last 57 field goals for Atlanta. Metcalf and Nate Lewis are two of the very best returners. Metcalf has five touchdowns off returns. **Grade: B**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT The defense ranked 27th last year, and Joe Haering, with Rod Rust's consulting help, will try to install a basic 4-3 scheme with emphasis on a pass-rush. Rust prefers zone coverage. Ken Herock and June Jones work well together, although Jones got burned by disciplining Rison. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: B-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 8-8

George had his best season in '94, but he still needs to improve his decision-making.



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1995 OVERVIEW This franchise was built on defense, special teams and ball-control offense. Jim Mora has now placed his future into Jim Everett's hands and turned his back on the 3-4 defense, costing him a friend in Steve Sidwell. The Saints might be better, but they'll miss the playoffs because the transformation isn't complete.

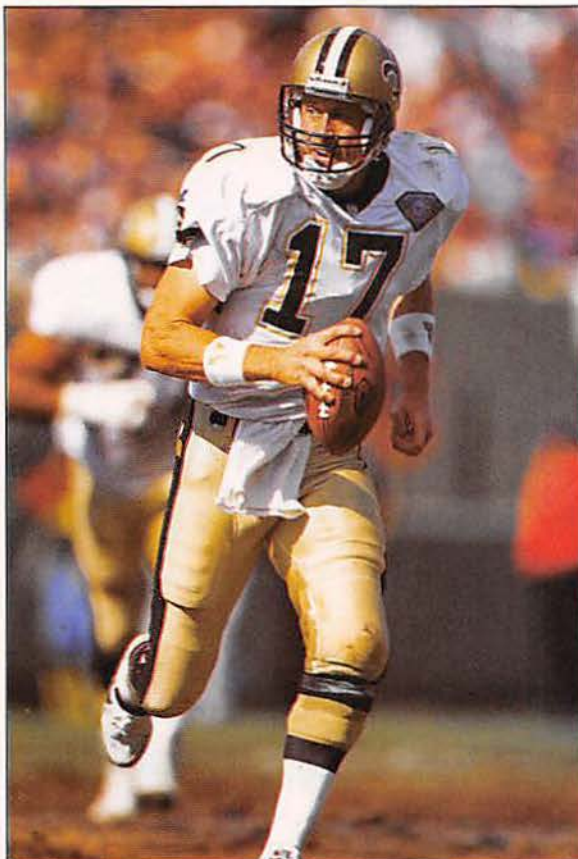
QUARTERBACK Everett followed his worst NFL season with a rather impressive one, finishing '94 as the league's fifth-rated quarterback. He passed for a club-record 3,855 yards, completing 64 percent and throwing 22 touchdowns. Mora describes Everett, entering his 10th NFL season, as a young 32. The change of scenery was good for his psyche, and with confidence, Everett should equal last year's numbers. Lefty Doug Nussmeier might be the quarterback of the future, but Timm Rosenbach will be the backup as he attempts to rejuvenate his career. **Grade: B+**

RUNNING BACKS When fullback Lorenzo Neal sucker-punched Mario Bates after the rookie Bates declined to buy him a beer, the Saints lost their best runner for five games with a broken jaw. Bates finished with 579 yards and six touchdowns, and was instrumental down the stretch when New Orleans won three of its final four, a stretch blemished only by a close loss to the Cowboys. Neal should be the blocking back, but he will be pressed by Notre Dame rookie Ray Zellars. Derek Brown can still bust outside, providing a super backup should Bates fail to carry the load. **Grade: B**

RECEIVERS Mike Haynes put his speed into second gear last season as he and Everett tried to get in sync. He still caught 77 passes, but his average per catch was four yards below his career mark of 16.2. The passing game could be explosive as Quinn Early (a team-high 82 receptions), Torrance Small and tight ends Irv Smith and Wesley Walls all enter the primes of their careers. Early and Small both run extremely well after the catch. Smith and Walls are great targets underneath. If the short game clicks, Haynes should be able to blow by defenses with his stop-and-go moves. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE Jeff Uhlenhake secured the middle last season, which allowed guards Chris Port and Jim Dombrowski to concentrate on their responsibilities. Both guards are good trappers and adequate pass blockers. All-Pro Willie Roaf (six holding penalties) struggled at left tackle at times. Richard Cooper hated the left side and found a home at right tackle. The Saints will run behind Mr. Cooper. The Saints can't afford an injury because Tom Roth and Alan Kline aren't ready to start. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS This is where all the Pro Bowl linebackers resided. But when leading-tackler Sam Mills turned his back on Mora—opting for Carolina for the same money the Saints offered—the era ended. New defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin has brought that four-man line scheme (Wayne Martin plays the "under" tackle role) down from Minnesota. Martin is the club's best defender, and Joe Johnson should be able to stunt off Martin's bullrush. Renaldo Turnbull's sack total dropped from 13 to 6.5, and he shifts to end. Mora believes Rufus Porter, whose sack counts declined



Still running from critics after a decade in the NFL, Everett ranked fifth among '94 passers.

in Seattle, will be explosive. Big linebacker question marks are rookie Mark Fields at strong side and Winfred Tubbs, who doesn't have the speed to play outside. **Grade: C-**

SECONDARY Safeties Sean Lumpkin and Vince Buck finished second and third in tackles last season, although the two combined for only two interceptions. Ex-Eagle Eric Allen will solidify right cornerback while forcing some turnovers. Corners Jimmy Spencer and Tyrone Hughes can cover, but they don't play the run well. Tyrone Legette is the only other returnee. **Grade: B**

SPECIAL TEAMS Morten Andersen missed 11 field goals last season, something he had never done in 13 NFL seasons. He was 0-for-6 beyond 50 yards. Klaus Wilmsmeyer left Candlestick's swirling winds for punting peace indoors. Tyrone Hughes' punt-return average declined last season, but he did return two kickoffs for touchdowns. **Grade: A**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Jim Mora enters his 10th season (84-59) determined to make the playoffs. Billy Kuharich has had chances to leave, but wants to see Mora in the playoffs. A big off-field test will be how the Saints handle working out of temporary trailers this season while the new facility is being built. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: B
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 8-8



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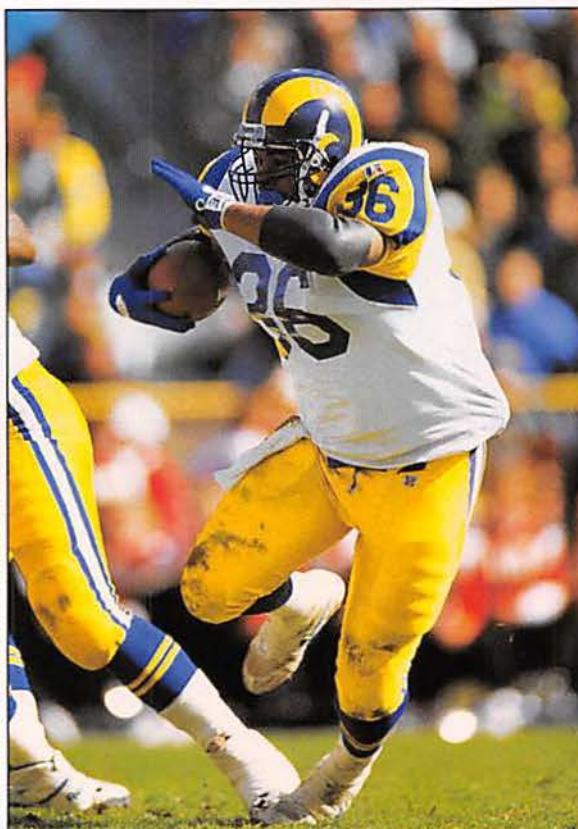
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Bettis: a frustrated, battered Ram who's had little luck running through peanut-sized holes.

1995 OVERVIEW The Rams are expected to debut in their new dome on Oct. 8 vs. Atlanta on TNT. However, a great infusion of cash from the club's move from L.A. and a spiffy locale change won't alter the performance on the field. Rich Brooks, 53, did a splendid job at Oregon, but personnel blunders explain why the Rams have a 23-57 record in the '90s.

QUARTERBACK There aren't many quarterbacks who look better in practice than Chris Miller, who starred at Oregon under Brooks. Miller, 30, has a horrible history of tearing up knees inside dome artificial surfaces, so he was fully against this St. Louis move. Miller, basically good enough to lose for you, had his two best games in losses to New Orleans and San Francisco. The backups are Mark Rypien and UCLA product Tommy Maddox, who has the arm, but not the accuracy. **Grade: D**

RUNNING BACKS No one suffered more during that season-ending seven-game losing streak than Jerome Bettis. In those games, Bettis had 211 yards (he gained 212 in a single game in '93) on 86 attempts, a 2.4 average. He had one rushing touchdown in 13 games. Not only was he frustrated, but the constant pounding slowed him down. After Bettis, halfback/receiver Johnny Bailey is the only effective weapon. Bailey led the club with 58 catches, none for a touchdown. **Grade: B+**

RECEIVERS Willie "Flipper" Anderson beat Deion Sanders for a touchdown and averaged 20 yards a catch, but the Rams didn't re-sign their '94 MVP. The year before, the Rams gave up on Henry Ellard, and he earned Comeback Player of the Year. Instead, new personnel director Steve Ortmyer gave fellow ex-Raider Alexander Wright, who has had seasons of 12, 27 and 16 receptions, \$3 million. The Rams did re-sign Jessie Hester, who's bounced around the league, and believe tight end Troy Drayton can be another Ben Coates. Isaac Bruce has game-breaking speed and will surprise. **Grade: C-**

OFFENSIVE LINE When the season starts, Wayne Gandy, last year's No. 1, and Jesse James, a rookie from Mississippi St., will be manning the tackles. James has longer arms than Gandy, but both are well over 320 pounds. St. Louis' best free-agent move was the signing of ex-Jet Dwayne White for \$10 million. White, a 330-pound bulldozer, will open at left guard. Bern Brostek ranks among the top 10 centers, and his quickness helps Leo Goeas on the left side. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Sean Gilbert disappeared last season because of severe tendinitis in his shoulders. The ailment has forced Gilbert to move to end, allowing No. 1 pick Kevin Carter to play tackle. The front four, with the exception of left end Robert Young, basically failed to show last season. It never applied constant pressure, forcing the linebackers into retreat. Shane Conlan and Roman Phifer finished 1-2 in tackles. The Rams are excited about D'Marco Farr, believing he will be in the pass-rush rotation. What the Rams need are a motivated Gilbert and career seasons from Jimmie Jones and Fred Stokes. Carlos Jenkins adds experience at linebacker. **Grade: B-**

SECONDARY The Rams lost their best player, safety Marquez Pope, to division rival San Francisco, and cornerback Darryl Henley (cocaine conviction) is on his way to federal prison. Anthony Parker, who returned three interceptions for touchdowns last season for the Vikings, will take Henley's spot, although his techniques aren't as good as Henley's. Toby Wright has the potential to become a Ronnie Lott-like strong safety. Anthony Newman and Todd Lyght are reliable starters, but neither makes plays that decide games. **Grade: D**

SPECIAL TEAMS Tired of kicker Tony Zendejas failing to reach the goal line with his kickoffs, the Rams will gamble with rookie Steve McLaughlin, who was clutch last season in college at Arizona. Sean Landeta had the best gross punting average in the NFC last season. Todd Kinchen and Johnny Bailey are above-average returners. **Grade: C+**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Vice-president John Shaw negotiated an impressive reward for owner Georgia Frontiere, which will annually pump an additional \$20 million into her pocketbook. The hiring of Brooks is an improvement over Chuck Knox, who failed to win consecutive games in three seasons. **Grade: C**

SPORT RATING: D
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 4-12



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NFC WEST

CAROLINA PANTHERS

5

1995 OVERVIEW The plan is to be playoff-competitive in four seasons, and that's possible if general manager Bill Polian and coach Dom Capers hit on 80 percent of their free-agent acquisitions and draft choices. They started with defense, the side of the ball Capers knows best, while using their first draft choice on Penn State quarterback Kerry Collins. That could be the twosome's first miss because Collins has flaws generally not attributed to franchise-type selections.

QUARTERBACK Frank Reich should double his NFL career starts (eight) this season. He's been a great reliever, especially during Buffalo's final Super Bowl push two years ago. His strengths are his accuracy, intelligence and gamesmanship. His durability and arm strength, though, will be tested. In 10 seasons, Reich has thrown for 2,540 yards, 18 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. Collins rated highest among Division I-A quarterbacks last season, with 2,679 yards and 21 touchdowns. He does throw a great deep ball, but has been criticized for a hitch in his delivery. **Grade: C-**

RUNNING BACKS In 1993, Derrick Lassic did an admirable job with the Cowboys replacing Emmitt Smith, scoring three touchdowns. He was on injured-reserve most of last season. Fullback Bob Christian is a solid blocker, but not much of a runner. Tony Smith has the great body, but runs too upright. Randy Baldwin is a better returner than natural runner. Howard Griffith pushes his weight around and could be a surprise if given an opportunity. **Grade: D**

RECEIVERS There hasn't been much attention paid to this position, other than the signings of

Bills tight end Pete Metzelaars, whose production dipped from 68 receptions in '93 to 49 last season, and another ex-Bill, Don Beebe, who had 40 receptions and four TDs in '94. Mark Carrier had 29 receptions last season, but he isn't tough and could fade when the season goes bad. Richard Buchanan has some promise. David Mims, Eric Guliford and Charles Swann combined for three receptions last season. **Grade: D**



OFFENSIVE LINE Derrick Graham has had weight and injury problems, but has the size and great balance to be a quality left tackle. Draft choice Blake Brockmeyer should be forced into the lineup on the right side, probably at tackle because overpaid Harry Boatwain struggles against quality pass rushers. Curtis Whitley played well for the Chargers last season and could be the No. 1 find in the expansion draft. Mike Finn and Darryl Moore are subpar performers. **Grade: C-**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Capers, who managed Bill Cowher's defense in Pittsburgh, loaded up on decent players. Houston's Lamar Lathon received \$13.5 million to play left outside linebacker, the Kevin Greene role. Lathon should blossom, considering linemen Mike Fox, Greg Kragen, Gerald Williams and draft choice Shawn King will apply some pressure. Darion Conner had 10½ sacks with New Orleans and seems to have beaten his off-field problems. Carlton Bailey had 70 tackles in '94 with the Giants. Sam Mills remains a steady performer, but his presence in the locker room will be worth millions because he's such a consummate pro. **Grade: B**

SECONDARY The Panthers went for speed at cornerback, taking James Williams and Rod Smith in the expansion draft. Brett Maxie is a proven NFL safety. The Raiders didn't give Cary Brabham a chance. Bad knee and all, Houston's Bubba McDowell should move into the starting lineup. First-round pick Tyrone Poole seems better equipped at cornerback and figures to play immediately in passing situations. **Grade: C-**

SPECIAL TEAMS This is the deepest and most prepared area on the team. John Kasay converted 20 of 24 field goals last season with the Seahawks, albeit indoors. Ex-Saints punter Tommy Barnhardt's 43.58-yard average ranked sixth last season. Barnhardt has gone 211 punts without a block. Vernon Turner, Randy Baldwin and Tony Smith are above-average returners. Turner led the Bucs with a 20.6 kick and 10.4 punt average, including an 80-yard touchdown. **Grade: A**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Capers better be good. The franchise surrendered two draft choices, including the 63rd overall, and \$150,000 to sign him after Polian admitted the Panthers tampered with him before Pittsburgh gave them permission. Pittsburgh players generally liked Capers and referred to him as a perfectionist. Polian is a solid GM, an old-school moralist, and someone who will pinch every penny of the \$37.1 million salary cap. Owner Jerry Richardson wants to win and will do what it takes. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: D
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 3-13

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**#042
5-K7**

1995 OVERVIEW With the expected declines in Minnesota and Green Bay, the Lions enter the season with the Central's best personnel, and the caper should be the additions of defensive coordinator John Teerlinck and defensive lineman Henry Thomas, who each bolted the Vikings for Motown's suburbs. Wayne Fontes doesn't receive many votes for Coach of the Year, but Barry Sanders likes him, and that should be good enough for anyone.

QUARTERBACK Scott Mitchell had an excellent off-season. His throwing shoulder stiffened last season from a deep bruise, and a broken right hand finally shelved him after Week 9. But Mitchell is a battler and will improve with playing time (only 16 career NFL starts). He still needs to look off receivers better, and Greg Landry was hired to refine his mechanics. Mitchell did beat the Cowboys last year in Dallas. One big problem is that Dave Krieg won't be around to rescue him. Don Majkowski figures to edge Don Hollas as the backup. **Grade: B**



RUNNING BACKS Sanders wasn't a factor in the playoff loss to Green Bay last season, but he still comes off a magnificent season in which he finished with 1,883 yards, the NFL's fourth-best total ever. Sanders had 50 carries of 10 yards or longer and proved his strength by leading all runners with 536 yards in the fourth quarter. His only downside was an NFL-high 51 carries for losses or no gain. Eric Lynch is the lone reserve. **Grade: A+**

RECEIVERS With Sterling Sharpe and Andre Rison out of the NFC, Herman Moore becomes the No. 2 man in the conference behind Jerry Rice. Like Rice, Moore is very physical and difficult to defend because of his size and speed. He averaged 16.3 yards a catch with 11 touchdowns. Brett Perriman can be a 60-catch receiver, and Aubrey Matthews and Johnnie Morton are fine playmakers. Tight end Ron Hall has been a disappointment, but will take a pay cut to stick around. Rodney Holman is a valuable reserve because of his leadership in the locker room. **Grade: A+**

OFFENSIVE LINE The Lions have had awful luck signing free-agent linemen and stayed out of the mix this year. Lomas Brown, entering his 11th campaign, dipped below 280 pounds last season and must bulk up to maintain his strength. Dave Lutz figures to re-sign and start at right tackle. Doug

Widell, Scott Conover and Mike Compton, who's had 15 total plays in three years, will fight for the starting guard spots. Kevin Glover has difficulty picking up stunts, but he's an excellent run blocker. Fact is, no one here can block Reggie White. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS John Teerlinck, an inventive coach with a wild passion for winning, hopes to double the Lions' sack total of 27 last season. He'll use No. 1 pick Luther Elliss at tackle on run downs and then line up former linebackers Tracy Scroggins and Tracy Hayworth as ends, with Henry Thomas and Robert Porcher inside. Antonio London could become a 10-sack linebacker on the open side. Chris Spielman had 195 tackles a year ago, a club record, while Mike Johnson should finish off runners that Spielman misses. Detroit has a chance to play havoc on defense. **Grade: B+**

SECONDARY The pass rush better materialize because the secondary is questionable. Strong safety Bennie Blades is showing signs of wear, and Robert Massey gambles too much at cornerback. Ryan McNeil often rattles with the game on the line. Van Malone shifts to free safety because of his speed and nose for the ball. Willie Clay is the only worthwhile reserve. **Grade: B**

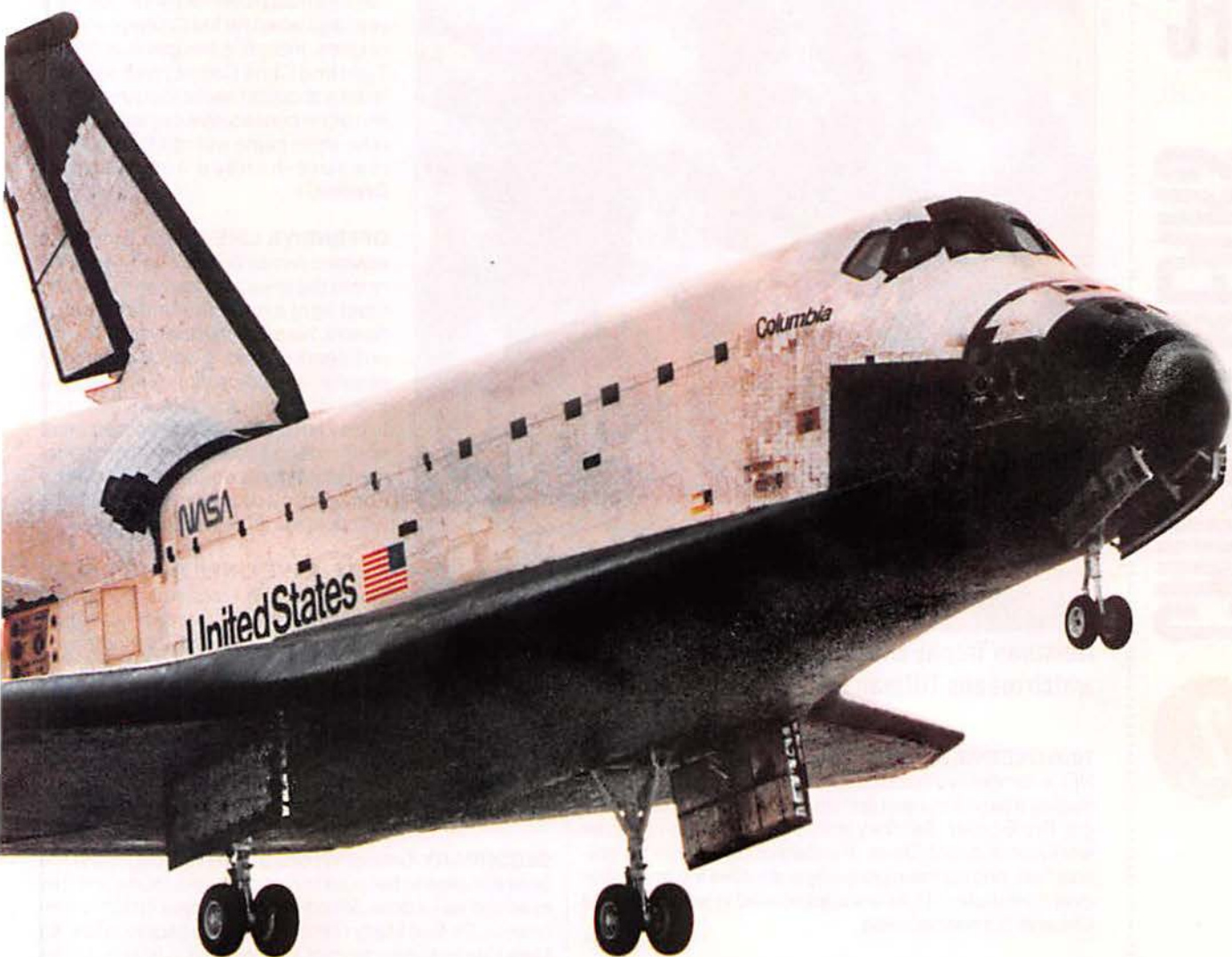
SPECIAL TEAMS Detroit had the worst kickoff coverage team in the NFL last season and third-worst punt cover team. To worsen matters, Mel Gray signed with Houston, and now the plan is to have Willie Clay, Perriman and Morton take turns returning punts and kicks. Kicker Jason Hanson directly cost the team two games, slipping in the clutch. Harold Alexander, who didn't have much luck in the Georgia Dome, tries a different indoor locale for his punting. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Chuck Schmidt is an underrated general manager, and everyone has said for years that the Lions have the division's best personnel, a credit to Ron Hughes' drafting. Fontes has a contract through '97, and players respond to his style. The coaching staff was upgraded this year. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: A-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-6



Sanders finished with a Lion's share of Detroit's yards in '94. His 1,883 rushing yards, in fact, was the fourth-highest total ever.



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RICH KANE



Heisman Trophy winner Rashaan Salaam has hit the scene, which means Tillman's (27) workload will diminish.

1995 OVERVIEW The Bears typify what's wrong with the NFL's competitive-balance theory. They won 10 games, including a playoff contest last season, and didn't have a single Pro Bowler. But they will continue to win because workaholic coach Dave Wannstedt refuses to be out-coached, and his team generally outlasts the opposition over 60 minutes. They are appreciated in working-class Chicago, but nowhere else.

QUARTERBACK In losing two critical midseason games, Erik Kramer was sacked five times and intercepted five times. In winning seven straight starts, Steve Walsh was sackless in five games and threw a touchdown pass in six. But Walsh's passes don't have Kramer's zip, and besides, Wannstedt greatly prefers Kramer, whose shoulder must heal for him to retain No. 1 status. Walsh will be there pushing him at every snap. **Grade: C+**

RUNNING BACKS Wannstedt quickly discovered that Lewis Tillman, 29, doesn't possess the natural running instincts to be any team's main man. Enter Heisman Trophy winner Rashaan Salaam, who led the nation with 2,055 yards and 24 touchdowns at Colorado last season. A ball-control back, Salaam loves to run between the tackles; the only knock is his lack of game-breaking speed. Chicago's best returning back is Raymont Harris, who led the NFL with only four negative carries on 123 attempts last season. Harris also caught 39 passes. **Grade: B+**

RECEIVERS Curtis Conway received a major wakeup call when New England's Michael Timpson (74 catches in '94) was signed. Conway has more explosion than Timpson,

yet he remains an unpolished receiver. Jeff Graham deserved MVP honors a year ago when he led Chicago with 68 catches, including two game-winners. Tight end Chris Gedney has now suffered a shoulder separation and a broken leg in consecutive seasons. There is no short game without Gedney and the sure-handed Tom Waddle. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE Coach Tony Wise elevated James Williams and Todd Perry into the lineup last season and now must light a huge fire under Marcus Spears, his most physically gifted blocker. Spears refused to work like a pro last season, and some wonder if he was a major draft bust. Andy Heck was forced to play left tackle despite being a more accomplished guard. Troy Auzenne remains in Wise's doghouse, and Jerry Fontenot is a rugged center. Williams will make a solid right tackle. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Gone is reliable Trace Armstrong. Ear-marked to be the left end is Alonzo Spellman, one of the NFL's most physically imposing athletes, who needs to play half as good as he looks. Chris Zorich and Carl Simpson are workman-like tackles. Former No. 1 pick John

Thierry must become a pass-rushing force. Joe Cain replaces Dante Jones at middle linebacker, and Vinson Smith, the weak-side linebacker, has 4.6 speed. **Grade: C+**

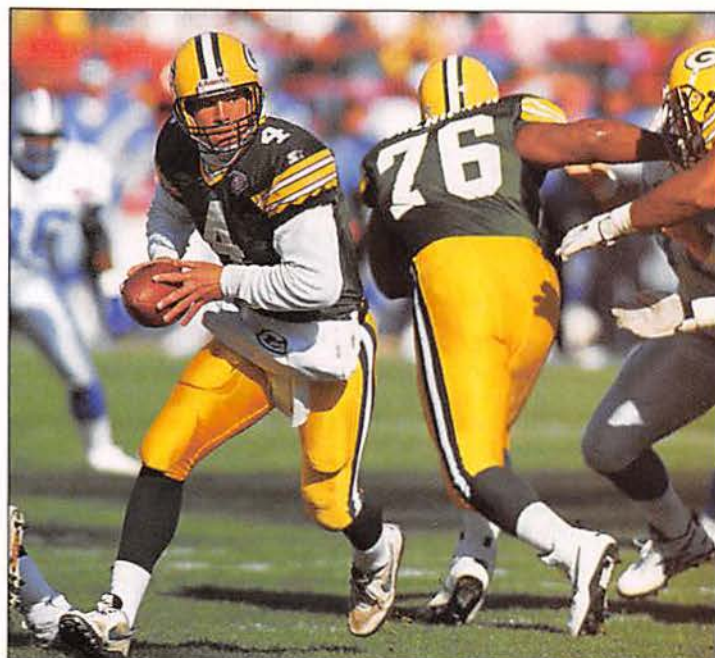
SECONDARY Donnell Woolford deserved to go to the Pro Bowl last season because few cornerbacks tackle and cover as well as he does. Woolford loves to lay a crunch on receivers. Ex-Buc Marty Carter is a superb tackler, allowing Mark Carrier to play more of a center field. Carter is a huge upgrade over Shaun Gayle. Carrier prefers to make spectacular plays rather than sticking his head into a pile. Jeremy Lincoln isn't a reliable cornerback against the run. John Mangum is a solid reserve. **Grade: B+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Kevin Butler returns off a solid season, and Conway and Graham are solid returners. The Bears used their 56th pick on West Virginia punter Todd Sauerbrun, who led the nation with a 48.4-yard average last season. His kickoff abilities match the departed Chris Gardocki: 41 of 52 kickoffs reached the end zone. But what makes this unit great is gambling coach Danny Abramowicz, whose trick plays and a high assortment of blocked kicks and punts directly contributed to five victories. **Grade: B**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Wannstedt has more freedom than Mike Ditka ever had. Owner Michael McCaskey continues his battle with the city of Chicago over a new stadium, looking hard at three alternative sites in the suburbs. McCaskey is driven by the bottom line, while his coach cares only for victories. **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: B+
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-6





Green Bay's offense has lost Sharpe-ness, so Favre may find himself improvising to put points on the board.

1995 OVERVIEW Injuries are part of the game, but no other franchise has suffered this club's personnel losses. Gone is Sterling Sharpe, maybe the game's greatest cold-weather receiver ever, and his tremendous production—18 touchdowns last year. Thirteen players, the team's depth, grabbed the money in free agency and bolted. The Packers still will be competitive because of two players: Brett Favre and Reggie White. It helps that Green Bay, which finally shifts all its home games to Lambeau Field, was 6-0 there last season.

QUARTERBACK Favre played like a young Terry Bradshaw last season. He was fearless and delivered big in the clutch. Always criticized for his decision-making, Favre cut his turnovers in half and raised his quarterback rating from 72.2 to 90.7. He ranked in the top 10 in every positive passing category, finishing with 3,882 yards and 33 touchdowns. His mere presence gives the Packers a chance in every game. Ty Detmer can come in and be successful, but isn't a long-range starter. Rookie Jay Barker did nothing but win at Alabama. **Grade: A+**

RUNNING BACKS Reggie Cobb never fulfilled his powerhouse promise and was grabbed by Jacksonville in the expansion draft. Edgar Bennett, the team's leading rusher (178 carries, 623 yards) and No. 2 receiver (career-high 78 receptions) last season, again can carry the load. Bennett loves to run the sweeps. Dorsey Levens, a second-year player, looked sharp during the off-season, while LeShon Johnson (knee ligament surgery) might not practice until September. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS To replace Sharpe's awesome production the past three seasons, including 42 touchdowns and an average of 105 receptions a year, the Packers acquired Miami's Mark Ingram and tight end Keith Jackson (who must be signed), who combined for 103 catches and 13 touchdowns last season. Yet no one can compare them to Jackie

Harris and Sharpe, players the Packers had two seasons ago. Robert Brooks, who had 15 receptions in two playoff games minus Sharpe, will help ease the pain. Anthony Morgan, Terry Mickens and Charles Jordan all have great athletic ability. **Grade: C**

OFFENSIVE LINE Four new starters in two seasons, and make that five if guard Guy McIntyre refuses to accept a pay cut. Aaron Taylor, the former No. 1 pick, was shifted to left guard in minicamps, but looked tentative on his surgically repaired knee. Ken Ruetters, an 11-year veteran, again mans left tackle, where he struggles with speed rushers. Frank Winters is a solid center. Harry Galbreath and Paul Hutchins start on the right side. Brian Bollinger, Earl Dotson and Jerry Crafts, who has ballooned to 390 pounds, are questionable reserves. **Grade: B-**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS This has been another revolving door. Bryce Paup went to Buffalo, and injuries forced linebackers Johnny Holland and Mark D'Onofrio to retire prematurely. Thank goodness for Reggie White, whose character and dedicated play holds this group together. White managed eight sacks last season despite being double-teamed constantly. The front will be upgraded when Gilbert Brown rehabs from knee surgery. Sean Jones, one of the game's smartest defensive ends, adds speed and savvy. George Koonce is a budding star who led the Packers with 104 tackles last season. Wayne Simmons has the ability to be as productive as Tony Bennett used to be. **Grade: A**

SECONDARY Doug Evans developed into an excellent cover cornerback last season, and defensive coordinator Fritz Shurmur hopes Sammy Walker or Lenny McGill can duplicate his production. The realization of that hope is essential considering the depleted numbers. Free safety George Teague's play slipped last season; the coaches attributed it to his hyperthyroid condition. LeRoy Butler was plagued by nagging injuries all season, but still managed to finish fourth in tackles. Rickey Dixon looked sharp in April and could help as a nickel back. **Grade: C+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Placekicker Chris Jacke missed six of 25 field goal attempts and reached the end zone only twice on 81 kickoffs. He needs work on his strength and confidence. Rookie Craig Hentrich battled the elements well and ranked seventh among NFL punters. Robert Brooks must pace himself as a punt returner now that he's the main receiver on offense. **Grade: B**



COACHING/MANAGEMENT General manager Ron Wolf and coach Mike Holmgren both have long-term job security, and club president Bob Harlan believes in them. Having Andre Rison sign with Cleveland was a critical loss, though, and could doom a quick recovery this season. **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: B
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 9-7

1995 OVERVIEW A lot hinges on the development of quarterback Trent Dilfer, who played poorly last season. Sam Wyche was given a reprieve by new owner Malcolm Glazer, and a gambling Wyche has cast his lot with Dilfer, trading productive Craig Erickson to Indianapolis. Rusty Tillman is an improvement over Floyd Peters as defensive coordinator, and the Bucs will use a 4-3 scheme.



QUARTERBACK When he played, Dilfer looked lost last season. His size and strong arm were never a factor because of all the poor decisions he made. In his 135 snaps, he was sacked eight times, completed 46 percent of his passes and was intercepted six times. Dilfer and Wyche worked daily, February through May, watching film and then working on fundamentals on the field. How Dilfer translates his talents to the field, then reacts under pressure, will decide this season. **Grade: C-**

RUNNING BACKS Errict Rhett was the NFC rookie of the year last season when he rushed for 1,011 yards and seven touchdowns. Rhett was caught dipping wide too much, something he should negate with more playing time. He should be a durable pro and figures to own most fourth quarters. Anthony McDowell can catch and is a fine lead blocker for Rhett. **Grade: B+**

RECEIVERS Alvin Harper received \$10.6 million after catching 33 passes last season. Granted, Harper is a game-breaker (almost 25 yards a catch and eight touchdowns), but there are differing thoughts about whether he can dominate a game by himself. Wyche believes that Harper's speed will simply make Lawrence Dawsey, Courtney Hawkins and Charles Wilson all the more dangerous. He could be right, but none of them is a go-to receiver. Dawsey can make the spectacular catch in traffic, while Hawkins is sure-handed. All eyes, though, will be on tight end Jackie Harris, 27, who played in only nine games last season. Harris can stretch a defense, but he hasn't played a full season since 1992. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE Charles McRae, a former No. 1 draft choice, ended his disappointing ways when he found a home at left guard. McRae had plenty of help around him. Tackle Paul Gruber had another solid season, and center Tony Mayberry continued to dominate. Gruber is fundamentally sound on his pass drops. The surprise was how Scott Dill seemed to find himself after years of struggling at right tackle. Dill displayed good balance and tenacity and in some games played better than Gruber. Ian Beckles is the third-best lineman on the team and the guy to whom most Rhett runs are directed. **Grade: B+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS The 4-2-5 scheme was a bust, and when middle linebacker Hardy Nickerson missed three games, the Bucs lost two of them. Based on the percentage of plays, the Bucs finished last in generating sacks and interceptions. They allowed 4.2 yards per rush and ranked 25th defending third downs. Nickerson, one of the game's most versatile linebackers, still led with 122 tackles. No. 1 pick Warren Sapp should be a force inside, creating more opportunities for Eric Curry and Mark Wheeler, who each had three sacks last season. Lon-

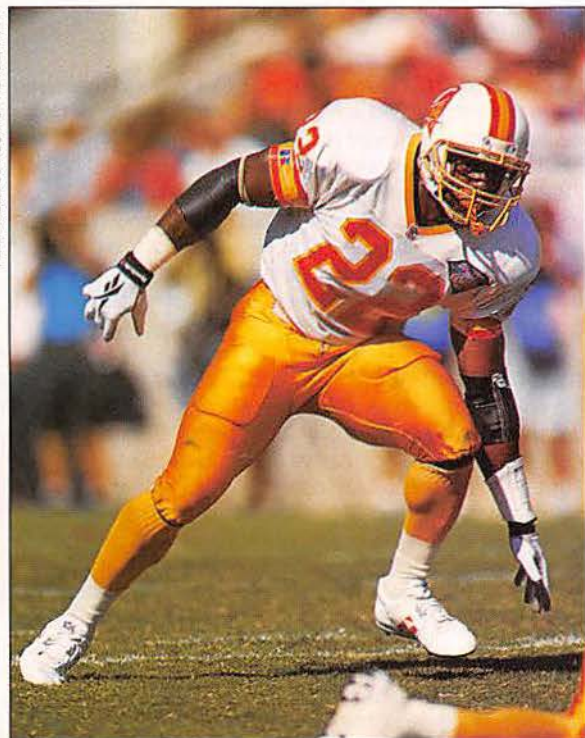
nie Marts is a solid tackler, but he's slow to react at times. Draft choice Derrick Brooks should beat out Demetrius DuBose as weak-side linebacker. **Grade: C+**

SECONDARY What this group lacks is a dominant defensive back, a person who can shut down the opponent's best weapon. Charles Dimry has improved from the days when he was toast for most receivers. Martin Mayhew is a solid zone cornerback who forces the run well. Thomas Everett simply didn't make enough plays last season for a free safety. John Lynch replaces the departed Marty Carter, the best secondary performer in '94. **Grade: D**

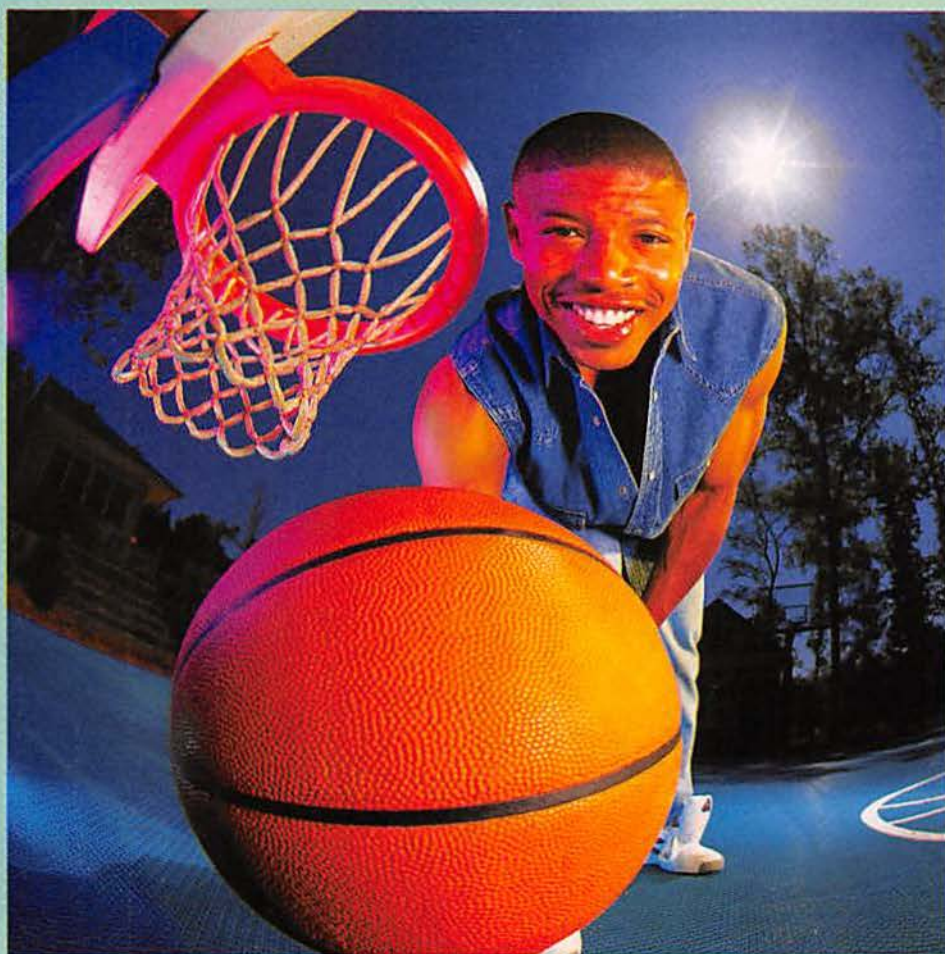
SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Reggie Roby received his million-dollar contract because he drilled 24 punts over 50 yards last season. Michael Husted has gone two seasons without missing an extra point, but he missed 11 field goals, high in the NFL. Clarence Verdin is an improvement over departed kick returner Vernon Turner. **Grade: A-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT After 12 consecutive seasons of 10 losses or more, Malcolm Glazer bought the team for \$192 million. Wow! He's promised to keep the club in Tampa through the '96 season. The Jimmy Johnson rumors have subsided, but no one really knows how Glazer will respond if Wyche doesn't win. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: B-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 8-8



Tampa Bay forecast: still on shaky ground, with a chance at .500 if Everett & Co. improve.



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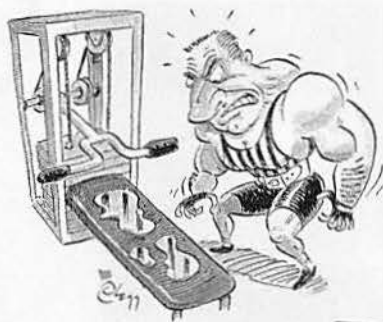


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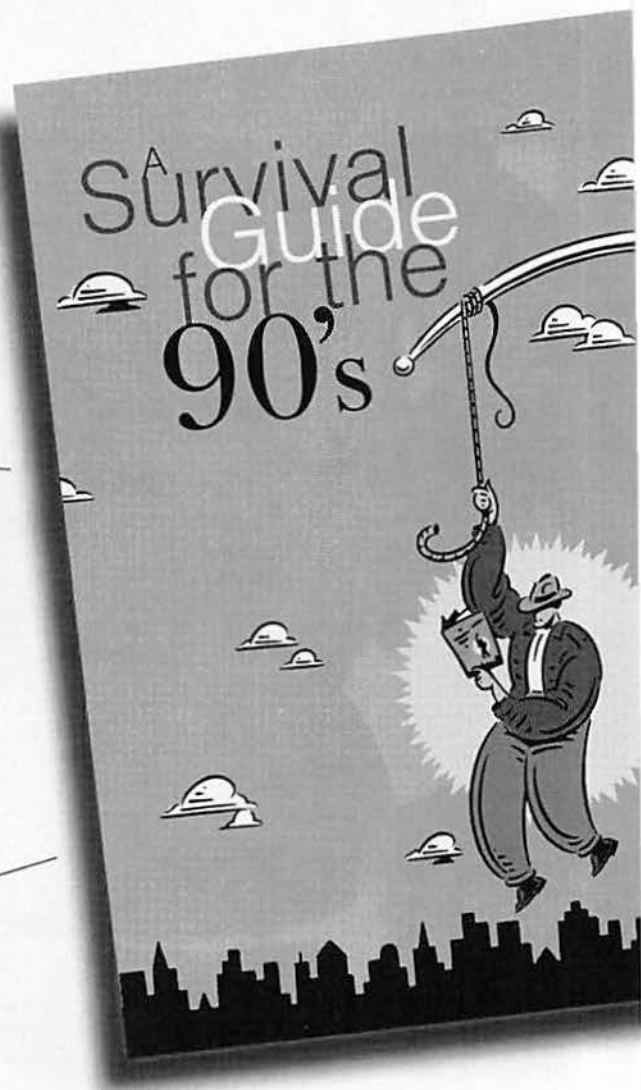
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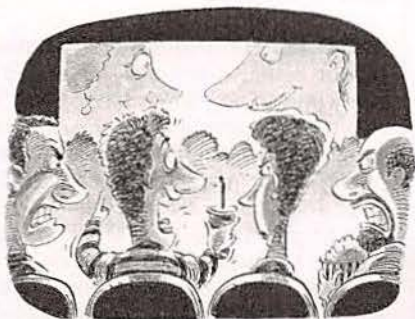
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TOGETHER, WE CAN WORK IT OUT

1995 OVERVIEW The offense, as long as Warren Moon stays in one piece, will generate excitement. The defense must locate a killer instinct if the Vikings are to be a playoff club. Dennis Green is a fine coach—18-6 vs. Central Division opponents in three years—but he hasn't won a playoff game yet and last year lost at home to the lowly Bears.

QUARTERBACK Moon, who'll be 39 in November, can't average 40 attempts a game again this season. Moon had six 300-yard passing games last season and has a reasonable chance to pass Johnny Unitas and Joe Montana for career passing yards this season. Oddly, Moon also has committed to a TV job when he isn't throwing touchdown passes. He's sticking around for one final shot at a Super Bowl, but the bottom line is his 3-7 playoff record. **Grade: C+**

RUNNING BACKS Despite becoming the first back to rush for more than 1,000 yards on two reconstructed knees, Terry Allen has been waived; combined, Robert Smith and Scottie Graham finished 718 yards behind him last season. Moon was forced to throw because the Vikings ranked 20th in NFL rushing. Smith, who had knee surgery two years ago, figures to be the first-down back, while Amp Lee returns for third-down duty. Lee could improve on his 45 receptions of a year ago. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS Cris Carter continues to be Buddy Ryan's biggest mistake. Since the Vikings claimed him on waivers in 1990, Carter has 4,383 receiving yards in 76 games. He caught an NFL-record 122 passes last season, but he should have more help this year. Jake Reed finally stayed healthy and caught 85 passes, while Qadry Ismail added 45. Tight end Andrew Jordan has soft hands and should push disappointing Adrian Cooper out. Minnesota also must find a way to get David Palmer the ball. **Grade: A-**

OFFENSIVE LINE No. 1 pick Korey Stringer should rival last year's rookie Todd Steussie at left tackle. The rest of the line is set, with left

guard Randall McDaniel, right guard Chris Hinton (in his 13th season) and right tackle Rick Cunningham. Jeff Christy got mauled at center last year, but there are no other options. Steussie can't play center and neither can Stringer. McDaniel is one of the NFL's fastest, quickest and most explosive guards. **Grade: B**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS The Vikings couldn't figure out how to replace Chris Doleman's sack production last season and now are hoping to patch the line with backups such as Esera Tuaolo and Roy Barker. They need Fernando Smith, who has outside pass-rush skills, to become another Doleman. John Randle was very close to the departed Henry Thomas, so there's no telling how that will affect Randle's production. He had 13½ sacks last season. Middle linebacker Jack Del Rio has led the team in tackles for three straight seasons and was the biggest reason Minnesota has the NFL's best rushing defense. Ed McDaniel has tremendous range, but Broderick Thomas has a tendency to quit playing when the season is on the line. **Grade: C**

SECONDARY There will be wholesale changes this season because Anthony Parker and Todd Scott signed elsewhere. The Vikings led the NFL with seven defensive touchdowns last season and Parker had three of them. But so did right cornerback Dewayne Washington, who still must improve on coverage. Donald Frank, Malik Boyd and Corey Fuller will battle at left cornerback. New England's Harlon Barnett should replace Scott at strong safety, while rookie Orlando Thomas might supplant Vencie Glenn at free safety. Charles Mincy gives defensive coordinator Tony Dungy some flexibility. **Grade: C+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Fuad Reveiz was 33 of 36 inside the 50-yard line last season, easily the best kicker in the NFL. He scored 132 points. His lone negative was kickoff distance. Mike Saxon finished second in the NFC in punting, and both Palmer and Ismail should add more flash to returns this season. **Grade: A-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Dennis Green has won the division two out of three years. He's been criticized by some as being a 9-to-5 coach and last season was also the target of sexual harassment charges. There is a general uneasiness between the coaching staff and front office at the moment. Dungy, however, is one of the game's finest defensive coordinators. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: C
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 7-9

While searching for a final title shot, Moon has the chance to make pass history.

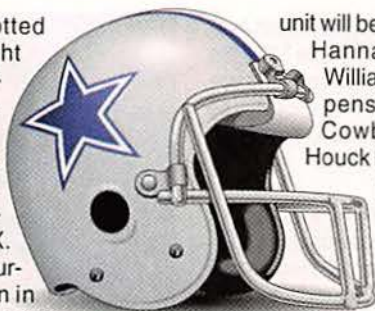
1995 OVERVIEW Had Dallas not spotted San Francisco 21 points in the first eight minutes of the NFC title game, the Cowboys might have three-peated. They remain the NFC's second-best team, and another title showdown is expected next January. The Deion Sanders Sweepstakes could dictate which team advances to Phoenix and Super Bowl XXX. Dallas owner Jerry Jones has said he'll pursue Deion because every football fan in Texas knows Steve Young victimized poor Larry Brown.

QUARTERBACK Troy Aikman still wishes Jimmy Johnson were his coach, and his many concussions—have missed two games last season—have fed rumors that he could retire prematurely. Aikman will turn 29 this season and remains the equal of Young. He'd be awesome in the 49ers' offense too. The only thing that bothers him is a wet ball. He's physically and mentally tough. In his last 38 starts, he's been intercepted in only 15 games. Wade Wilson replaces Rodney Peete as Aikman's backup. **Grade: A+**

RUNNING BACKS Emmitt Smith earns quarterback money and deservedly so. He produced 101 first downs last season, a big reason why Dallas had the NFL's best red-zone offense. The Cowboys produced points 90.2 percent of the time inside the 20-yard line. On 61 visits, they scored 55 times, Smith producing a league-high 21 touchdowns. He's blessed with super peripheral vision and is difficult to arm tackle. Daryl Johnston makes Smith the main man. From his fullback position, Johnston clears opposing linebackers and safeties from Smith's path. Alabama rookie Sherman Williams will be Smith's backup. **Grade: A+**

RECEIVERS What's perplexing about losing Alvin Harper is that the predictable replacement, Kevin Williams, performs better as the slot receiver than flanked wide. This is why Corey Fleming, ironically a former 49ers draft choice, may start, leaving Williams as the nickel receiver and for return duties. Michael Irvin will attract more attention, something he thrives on. No one muscles defensive backs better than Irvin, who has averaged 1,373 receiving yards over the past four seasons. Tight end Jay Novacek is slowing down, but his presence is critical to the offense and Aikman's well-being. **Grade: A**

OFFENSIVE LINE The right knee injury to Pro Bowl tackle Erik Williams might keep him sidelined until October, and until he returns, this



unit will be understaffed. Ron Stone or rookie Shane Hannah will have to start at right guard until Williams returns to right tackle. When that happens, Larry Allen will slide to guard, and the Cowboys will be awesome. Coach Hudson Houck believes Allen could develop into a better player than Williams. Ray Donaldson (37) replaces center Mark Stepnoski. The left side is intact with Nate Newton and Mark Tuinei. They surrendered only 20 sacks last season. **Grade: B+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Eventually, some of the youngsters have to step up because Charles Haley and Tony Tolbert need a rest; also, this is Haley's final season. Haley had 12½ sacks last season and seemed to mellow off the field. Chad Hennings will push Russell Maryland this season at left tackle. Leon Lett must take his game to another level. Middle linebacker Robert Jones was the leading tackler, but tired at the end of the season. Darrin Smith is the NFL's best weak-side linebacker. Shante Carver, Jerry Jones' first draft choice, has been a bust thus far. **Grade: B+**

SECONDARY Dave Campo, the last assistant who understands Jimmy Johnson's defensive scheme, is now the coordinator after coaching the secondary. Campo would love to have Sanders, while realizing he probably will have to live with Larry Brown at right cornerback. Brown receives so much attention because Kevin Smith shuts down the left side. Brock Marion, a great special-teams player, will assume James Washington's free-safety spot. Washington is the third critical secondary loss Dallas has suffered since its first Super Bowl. **Grade: B**

SPECIAL TEAMS Rookie Chris Boniol proved he belonged by nailing his first nine field goals last season, while John Jett placed 26 punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Kevin Williams had two returns for TDs last season. But coaches believe Sherman Williams could handle the duties should Kevin Williams become a full-time starter. **Grade: B**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT There isn't an NFL coach having more fun than Barry Switzer. He might have bumped an official in the NFC title game, but most Dallas fans thought Switzer was right—the ref screwed up. No owner understands marketing and making money better than Jerry Jones. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 11-5

America's Team dropped back behind the Niners. Now it's up to Aikman to strike back.

1995 OVERVIEW How much did Dave Brown learn last season, and has he assimilated totally into the pro game? Will the offensive line block up to expectations? If the answers are positive, the Giants are a playoff team because the East is so weak. Brown has the confidence and bravado to lift his game, but results speak louder than words.

QUARTERBACK Brown understands pressure, accepts it and believes he can overcome it. He must overcome the costly mistakes that led to his benching last season. Three of his 12 interceptions in his first nine starts were returned for touchdowns, including a heartbreaker in New Orleans. But after the Giants' great fall, Brown returned strong, understanding his limitations in their season-ending five consecutive victories. Brown has exorcised the ghost of Phil Simms. **Grade: B**

RUNNING BACK Rodney Hampton, who has four consecutive 1,000-yard seasons, something no Giant had ever attained, was a problem child during the spring and enters the final year of a contract lacking some speed. This is why Tyrone Wheatley was the first draft choice. Wheatley is a productive insurance blanket. The Giants rushed the ball 525 times last season, third highest in the NFL, but averaged only 3.34 yards per attempt, the 25th best. With Dave Meggett gone, ex-Eagle Herschel Walker will rotate at H-back with Aaron Pierce. Walker claims he's faster than ever. He did have the longest run—91 yards—from scrimmage in the NFL last season. **Grade: A**

RECEIVERS Mike Sherrard complained about being overlooked last season, and that won't happen again. Sherrard has proven to be reachable deep, and both he and Chris Caloway run exact patterns. The pair combined for 96 catches and 1,491 yards last season. What makes the offense work, though, are the tight ends—Howard Cross and Aaron Pierce. They combined for 51 catches, 578 yards and eight touchdowns last season, numbers that will surely increase. Thomas Lewis should make a big impact as the third receiver. **Grade: B**

OFFENSIVE LINE This group slipped badly last season, allowing 46 sacks and never sustaining a solid push on running plays. The front office underestimated the value of center Bart Oates. Left tackle Jumbo Elliott, bad back and all, remains the line's most consistent performer. Right guard Lance Smith and center Brian Williams are big men who must get nasty. William Roberts can dominate if he wants to. Tackle Doug Riesenberger simply wasn't an overachiever last season. **Grade: B-**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Another facelift this season. Last year it was trying to replace Lawrence Taylor; this year the plan is moving Michael Brooks, their best tackler, to middle linebacker. Brooks figures to have another ex-Bronco on one side, linebacker Mike Croel. Keith Hamilton, whose sack total declined in '94, will move inside, as the Giants unleash ex-Viking Robert Harris and Mike Strahan at ends. Corey Miller must record bigger numbers. Chris Maumalanga and Stacey Dillard are above-average reserves. **Grade: C**

SECONDARY A draft-day trade for Minnesota's Vencie Glenn canceled the idea of starting ex-Bear Mo Douglass at strong safety. Glenn's play slipped, but he's smart, despite vanishing speed. Douglass is a head-knocking nickel back. Right cornerback Thomas Randolph fits the star mold after learning on the job as a rookie. Phillippi Sparks can cover but



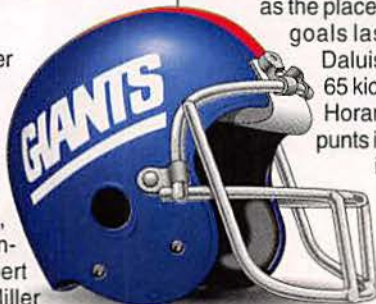
Though he owns a Giants-record four straight 1,000-yard seasons, Hampton has lost speed.

shies away from tackling. Jesse Campbell has found a home in New Jersey after years of being a benchwarmer. Jason Sehorn has the tools, yet needs to adjust to the pro game. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS Brad Daluiso replaced David Treadwell as the placekicker and merely nailed all 11 of his field goals last season. With his booming right leg, Daluiso led all NFL kickers by placing 19 of his 65 kickoffs in the end zone for touchbacks. Mike Horan excels at directional punting, placing 25 punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Replacing Meggett in the return game will be tough, but Arthur Marshall, Thomas Lewis and Walker will take a shot. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Dan Reeves ranks among the game's finest coaches; only a handful would have produced nine wins with the talent and turmoil he coped with last season. Reeves and general manager George Young don't necessarily agree on every personnel matter, but neither did Young and Bill Parcells, and those two won Super Bowls. Ernie Accorsi is primed to replace Young. **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: B+
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-6



1995 OVERVIEW The Redskins are coming off their worst season in 31 years, but the future looks better. The whole division is going through a transformation, and head coach Norv Turner is one who should be able to take advantage of the attitude change. The defense has been rebuilt through free agency, and Heath Shuler appears ready. The season opener against Arizona should tell what direction this franchise is headed.

QUARTERBACK Shuler looked worse than either John Friesz or fellow rookie Gus Frerotte at times last season. Shuler finished 1-7 as the starter, but he worked hard in the off-season—his 13-day holdout ruined him last year—and simply must improve on a woeful 45 percent completion rate. Combined, the quarterbacks were intercepted 27 times, a major reason Washington was a pathetic -17 on the turnover table. Shuler has the arm and is supremely confident in his abilities. Frerotte has a stronger arm, but he hasn't received the coaching attention Shuler has. **Grade: C+**

RUNNING BACKS A pulled hamstring, costing Reggie Brooks most of training camp, was the ruination of this offense last season. Brooks, who averaged 4.8 yards a carry in '93, will be the main man again. He fell 750 yards below his '93 output last season. Brooks has the leg power of Emmitt Smith; he simply needs to stay healthy. Ex-49er Marc Logan fits Turner's offense because he can block and catch. Ditto for rookie fullback Larry Jones, who was also a tough runner at Miami. Brian Mitchell is a decent backup. **Grade: B-**

RECEIVERS Henry Ellard, 34, proved that there is life after 30. Ridiculed by the Rams, Ellard had two of the top six receiving games in the NFL last season and led the league with 30 receptions of 20 yards or longer. With Turner and Shuler thinking deep, Ellard should go over 1,300 yards again this season. No. 1 pick Michael Westbrook provides another big-play target, while Tydus Winans also averaged 18 yards per catch last season. Winans should double his production. James Jenkins is no improvement over Ethan Horton at tight end. **Grade: A-**

OFFENSIVE LINE Ed Simmons and Jim Lachey are coming off good seasons. Lachey will remain at left tackle, while

Simmons slides out to right tackle as Tre Johnson is shifted to right guard. The Redskins now say Johnson's arms are long enough to play tackle. John Geseke is a smart, if not physical, center. The advantage with Geseke is that he can also play either guard position, leaving room for Wisconsin rookie Corey Raymer, a super center prospect. Two aging starters moved elsewhere, leaving Ray Brown to assume Mark Schlereth's spot. **Grade: B**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Ron Lynn's defense allowed an NFL-high 412 points last season and blew numerous fourth-quarter leads. The 'Skins still have two undersized ends in Tony Woods (260 pounds) and Sterling Palmer (256), but they have rebuilt the support staff. Rod Stephens has great range at middle linebacker, and Marcus Patton can stick with any tight end. Both Patton and Stephens are sure tacklers. Patton and Ken Harvey (13½ sacks) will blitz anybody. It's essential that Tim Johnson and Bobby Wilson are available for a full season, something the two have never accomplished. Overall, the speed has been increased. **Grade: B+**

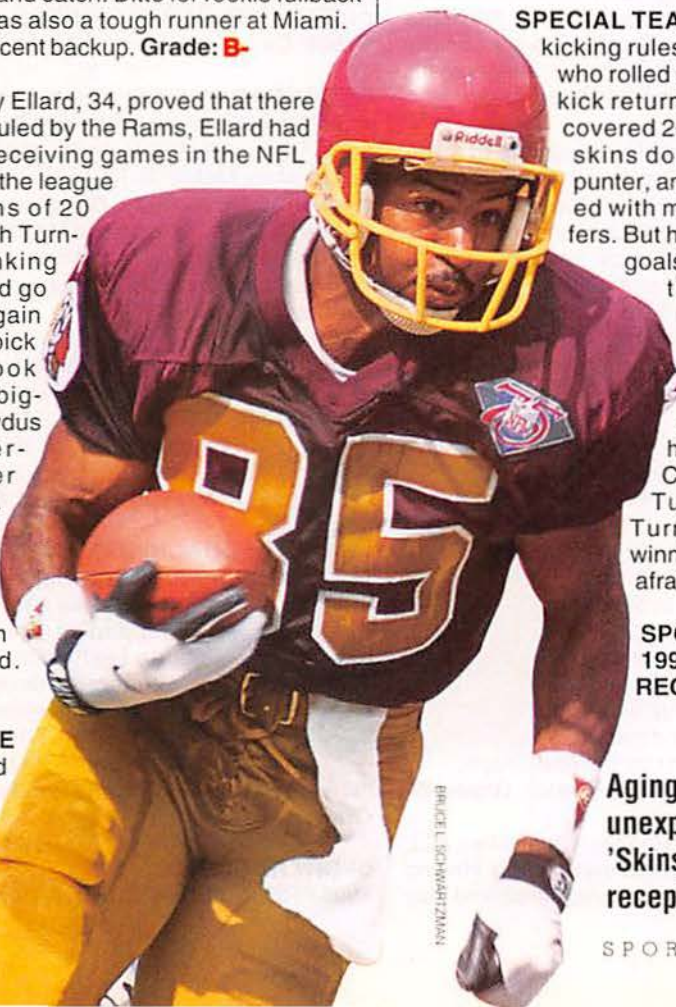
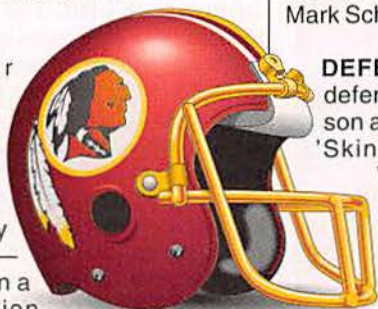
SECONDARY Tom Carter and Darrell Green both were disillusioned with Lynn last season. But with the arrival of safeties James Washington and Stanley Richard, the two cornerbacks simply have to stuff their man and allow the safeties to make their plays. Washington (Dallas) and Richard (San Diego) are used to playing in Super Bowls. Both anticipate well and are productive gamblers. **Grade: A-**

SPECIAL TEAMS No one loved the new kicking rules more than Brian Mitchell, who rolled up 1,930 yards on punt and kick returns. He had 41 returns that covered 20 yards or more. The Redskins don't have an experienced punter, and Chip Lohmiller is frustrated with management's low-ball offers. But he's now missed seven field goals of less than 40 yards over the past two seasons. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT For some reason, owner Jack Kent Cooke has been supportive of Charley Casserly and Norv Turner despite the losses. Turner will get the Redskins winning again because he's not afraid to gamble. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: B
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 9-7

Aging Ellard had an unexpectedly big year for the 'Skins, leading the league in receptions of 20-plus yards.





Trade talks and injuries have encumbered Cunningham, and the Eagle's clock is ticking.

1995 OVERVIEW Ray Rhodes has vowed that the Eagles won't be a .500 club and eventually will win the Super Bowl. Well, not this year. The Eagles have too many holes on defense, where Rhodes shines, and they still must rehabilitate quarterback Randall Cunningham.

QUARTERBACK Owner Jeff Lurie wanted to trade Cunningham, but Rhodes figured there wasn't an available quarterback worth getting. Without question, Cunningham felt mistreated last season, and his performances showed it. He had five games with interceptions and no touchdown passes. Cunningham, 32, must improve because the San Francisco-style offense the Eagles will employ demands it. Rodney Peete is another good athlete who can fire the long ball. **Grade: C+**

RUNNING BACKS Although Herschel Walker was the heart and soul of this team last season, the backfield is better without him. Ricky Watters turns his runs wide too often, but he's been awfully productive. The ex-49er touched the ball 305 times from scrimmage last season, averaging 5.23 yards. He's more dangerous as a receiver. Fullback Kevin Turner, formerly of New England, can block and also catch. Only 26, Turner is on the verge of being a star. This is the best all-around backfield in the East, considering Vaughn Hebron and Charlie Garner, two explosive types, are on the bench. **Grade: B-**

RECEIVERS Fred Barnett roared back from a torn ACL to catch 78 passes for 1,127 yards last season. He and Calvin Williams can both catch the deep slants and love

going over the top. Williams' touchdown production dropped from 10 to three last season, mainly due to Cunningham's misfires. With the new running backs, Barnett and Williams should find more open spaces. Jeff Sydnor is the lone quality reserve following the trade of valuable Victor Bailey. Tight end Reggie Johnson won't remind anyone of Mark Bavaro. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE The possibility exists for a major facelift because Rhodes is down on several veterans. Ex-Redskin Raleigh McKenzie, who can also play guard, will be shifted to center Dave Alexander's spot. Rhodes feels Alexander is too soft. Nor will Rhodes tolerate the mistakes of left tackle Bernard Williams, who displayed great promise with his coordinated 6-8, 330-pound frame last season. But the big rookie also led the NFL with 10 holding penalties. Joe Sims, who started for Green Bay, could move ahead of Antone Davis at right tackle. Lester Holmes and Joe Panos, who can run, will open at the guards. Those two are the team's best blockers. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Rhodes will be hard-pressed to match ex-coordinator Bud Carson's scheming last year, which resulted in 54 three-downs-and-out stops on 195 opponent possessions, tops in the NFL. The key will be whether middle linebacker Byron Evans, whose bone broke vertically below his knee, recovers by September and then decides to re-sign. Ex-Redskin Kurt Gouveia will man the spot initially. William Fuller and Andy Harmon, who combined for 19 sacks, are demons on the left side, while heralded rookie Mike Mamula, only 245 pounds, will shoot from the right side; his size, not his heart, has been questioned. Rhodes didn't like Bill Romanowski in San Francisco, so that could be a problem. Rhett Hall might be overmatched too. **Grade: C+**

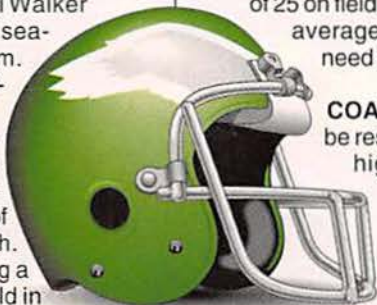
SECONDARY With Eric Allen gone, the Eagles must start Notre Dame rookie Bobby Taylor at right cornerback. Taylor, 6-2, 208, looks the part and has outstanding range. Mark McMillian loves to press receivers, give a cushion and then attack. But quarterbacks fire over his 5-7 frame. Greg Jackson and Michael Zordich combined for 10 interceptions last season at safety, and they'll have to better that performance this year. There is no depth. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS A total gamble with two rookie punters. Tennessee's Tom Hutton, who averaged 40.3 yards last season, is the leader. Eddie Murray was a reliable 21 of 25 on field goals. Vaughn Hebron and Sydnor are average returners, while the coverage teams need a major overhaul. **Grade: D**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Rhodes will be respected by his players, and he receives high marks as a teacher and for game preparation. Emmitt Thomas should be a big help on defense, while Jon Gruden, 32, never played in the pros and has never been an offensive coordinator. There has been major turnover inside the front office, but

there's no question Lurie and Rhodes are in total control. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 6-10



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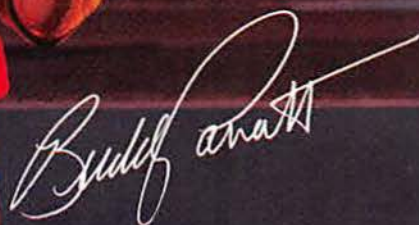
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1995 OVERVIEW The Cardinals would be better off with Buddy Ryan being an offensive genius rather than a defensive one. Any solid coordinator could oversee Arizona's defensive personnel. Now Ryan has entrusted his offense to veteran Dave Krieg, who'll turn 37 in October. He's playing quarterback roulette with a team brimming with exceptional talent worthy of playoff consideration.

QUARTERBACK Krieg did put Detroit in the playoffs, and had he qualified, his 101.7 quarterback ranking would have been second only to Steve Young's. However, his throws don't have the zip they once did, and his best statistical games were in the controlled environment of Pontiac Stadium, where he completed 66 percent of his throws and had eight touchdowns to no interceptions. Beyond 10 yards, Krieg's completion average was 48.3 percent; under 10 yards it was 72.5 percent. Huge difference. Jay Schroeder's arm is more powerful, but he's less accurate. Stoney Case of New Mexico State was a reach in the third round. But Case does possess all the tough-guy intangibles Ryan adores. **Grade: C**

RUNNING BACK Ryan swapped his best running back, Ron Moore, for Jets receiver Rob Moore. That's not a bad deal except that Ryan really doesn't have much confidence in Garrison Hearst, who showed a great burst in December. Hearst is the best runner, but it's unlikely that Ryan will baby him. Larry Centers makes the offense go with his pass receptions (77 last year), although he's only a fair inside runner. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS Ryan disliked every one of his receivers last season, so Randal Hill, Gary Clark and Ricky Proehl have found employment elsewhere. Rob Moore led the Jets with 78 catches for 1,010 yards and six touchdowns. Moore loves to go deep, which isn't Krieg's strong suit. Chuck Levy and Byron Reeves will contest the other spot with rookie Frank Sanders, who was a clutch player for Auburn. Sanders is a great all-around athlete. Reeves displayed fine hands last December. Tight end Chad Fann is no receiving threat. **Grade: B-**

OFFENSIVE LINE The Cardinals' best prospect, Anthony Redmon, doesn't have a definite spot unless left guard Ernest Dye is benched. Ex-Steeler Duval Love will start at right guard, with Ed Cunningham starting because of default at center. Joe Wolf is better at right tackle than guard. Wolf locks onto rushers well and sustains his blocks. Ben Cole-

man returns to left tackle for training camp to see if he can improve. There are too many 300-pounders who don't move well. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Clyde Simmons and Seth Joyner are the names, but Eric Swann and Michael Bankston are the players. Swann continues his rapid improvement; he and Bankston combined for 14 sacks. Simmons, who is slowing down, had six last season. Eric Hill assumed a leadership role at middle linebacker and should be a Pro Bowler this year. A holdout killed Jamir Miller's season, but he has too much talent to sit behind Wilber Marshall. Bernard Wilson is simply a stop-gap move at right tackle. Miller and Joyner will raise havoc on opposing quarterbacks, with Swann smashing the pocket. **Grade: A-**

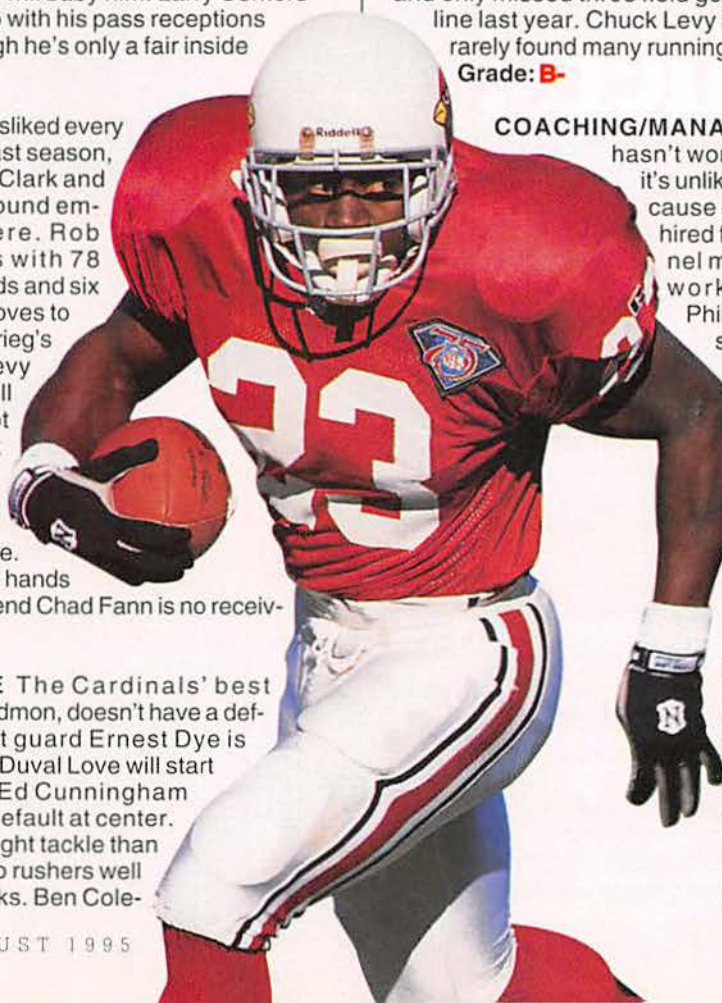
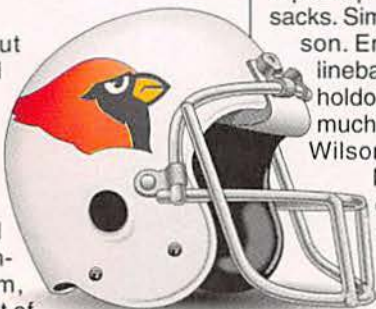
SECONDARY Aeneas Williams, the best read-and-react cornerback in the NFC, had nine interceptions last season and the Pro Bowler is only 27. Williams may even be tested more this year because ex-Seahawk Patrick Hunter is a major upgrade over James Williams at right cornerback. Lorenzo Lynch, a fearsome tackler, will return to strong safety after being forced to play some cornerback. Terry Hoage isn't the fastest free safety, but he ranks among the smartest. **Grade: B+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Jeff Feagles and Greg Davis both ranked among the top third of NFL punters/kickers last season. A fine directional punter, Feagles has nailed 64 coffin kicks inside the 20-yard line the last two seasons. Davis hasn't missed an extra-point since 1989 and only missed three field goals inside the 50-yard line last year. Chuck Levy and Patrick Robinson rarely found many running lanes on kick returns. **Grade: B-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Ryan still hasn't won a playoff game, and it's unlikely he will this year because of his offense. He has hired former Eagles personnel man Joe Wooley, who worked well with him in Philadelphia. There isn't a stranger, more unpredictable owner in professional sports than Bill Bidwill. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 5-11

Looking for a way into the Cards' game plan, Hearst may get his shot because of a dearth of runners in the desert.





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LOS ANGELES RAIDERS

1



Hostetter (15) continually clashed with former coach Shell, but now can focus on making a run for success.

tiveness last year negated the speed of both players. Tight end Kerry Cash started 48 games for the Colts and will be an upgrade from Andrew Glover. **Grade: A+**

OFFENSIVE LINE There wasn't much cohesiveness in this unit last season, which explains the 50 sacks, 123 quarterback hits and 21st-rated running game. The line also was most responsible for the team's NFL-record 156 penalties. Gerald Perry and Steve Wisniewski both were penalized 12 times, seven each for holding—and they are the team's two best linemen. Don Mosebar will return for a 13th season. Kevin Gogan should benefit from Joe Bugel's coaching. Gogan and right tackle Greg Skrepenak need to improve their run-block push. As one of the game's best, Bugel figures to make a difference. **Grade: B**

1995 OVERVIEW There is this impression that new head coach Mike White, because he's a buddy of Bill Walsh, will have more freedom within the Raiders than any of his predecessors, particularly Art Shell and Mike Shanahan. If this proves true, the Raiders will make the playoffs. This was the most talented team that stayed home last January. White's elevation should drastically improve the offense, which was pathetic from play-calling to execution.

QUARTERBACK Jeff Hostetter constantly clashed with Shell and Tom Walsh, the departed ones. New coordinator Jim Fassel worked with Hoss in New York, which should be a communication benefit. Hostetter's throwing arm was never 100 percent last season—if it wasn't his elbow, it was the thumb or shoulder—and many of his attempts lacked velocity. Still, Hostetter managed 42 completions of 20 yards or longer and had another 224 passing yards (an NFL high) negated because of penalties. Backup Vince Evans probably will return for a 16th season.

Grade: B+

RUNNING BACKS No team made more alterations in the backfield than the Raiders. Harvey Williams was so desperate to prove he's great that he signed for \$500,000 after falling 17 yards shy of 1,000 despite being the backup for seven games. Derrick Fenner will replace Tom Rathman as the fullback, while Tyrone Montgomery and Calvin Jones figure to lose playing time to No. 1 pick Napoleon Kaufman. Kaufman has more speed than Williams, who did learn to be more of a north-south runner last season and shed his gutless tag. **Grade: B**

RECEIVERS Hostetter had tunnel vision last season: In his sight, he saw only Tim Brown. Brown, now in his eighth season, set career marks with 89 catches for 1,309 yards. He should match those numbers, but the Raiders must get Rocket Ismail more involved. Ismail will rotate with James Jett at wide receiver and also slide into the slot. Hostetter's ineffec-

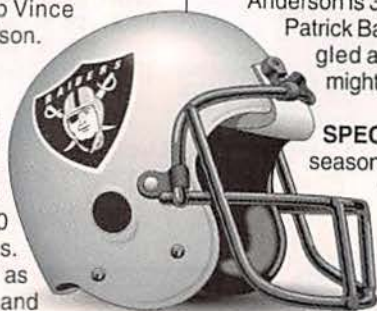
DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Chester McGlockton earned his first of many Pro Bowl tickets last season after he registered 9½ sacks and 61 solo tackles. He's been nicked up, but still is a relentless force inside. Nolan Harrison and Anthony Smith are above-average linemen, while Jerry Ball plays the run solidly. Pat Swilling could be a gamble at weak-side linebacker, but he's done it in the past. Greg Biekert and Rob Frederickson will improve with experience. Rob Holmberg has potential, and James Folston will work as a weak-side rusher. **Grade: A**

SECONDARY Albert Lewis and Terry McDaniel can man-cover the game's best receivers. McDaniel works best in the slot and had seven interceptions last season. Najee Mustafaa returns after a year absence from the game. Eddie Anderson is 32 and slowing down. Derrick Hoskins and Patrick Bates can both run, but mentally have struggled and missed their assignments. Hoskins might be better at free safety. **Grade: A-**

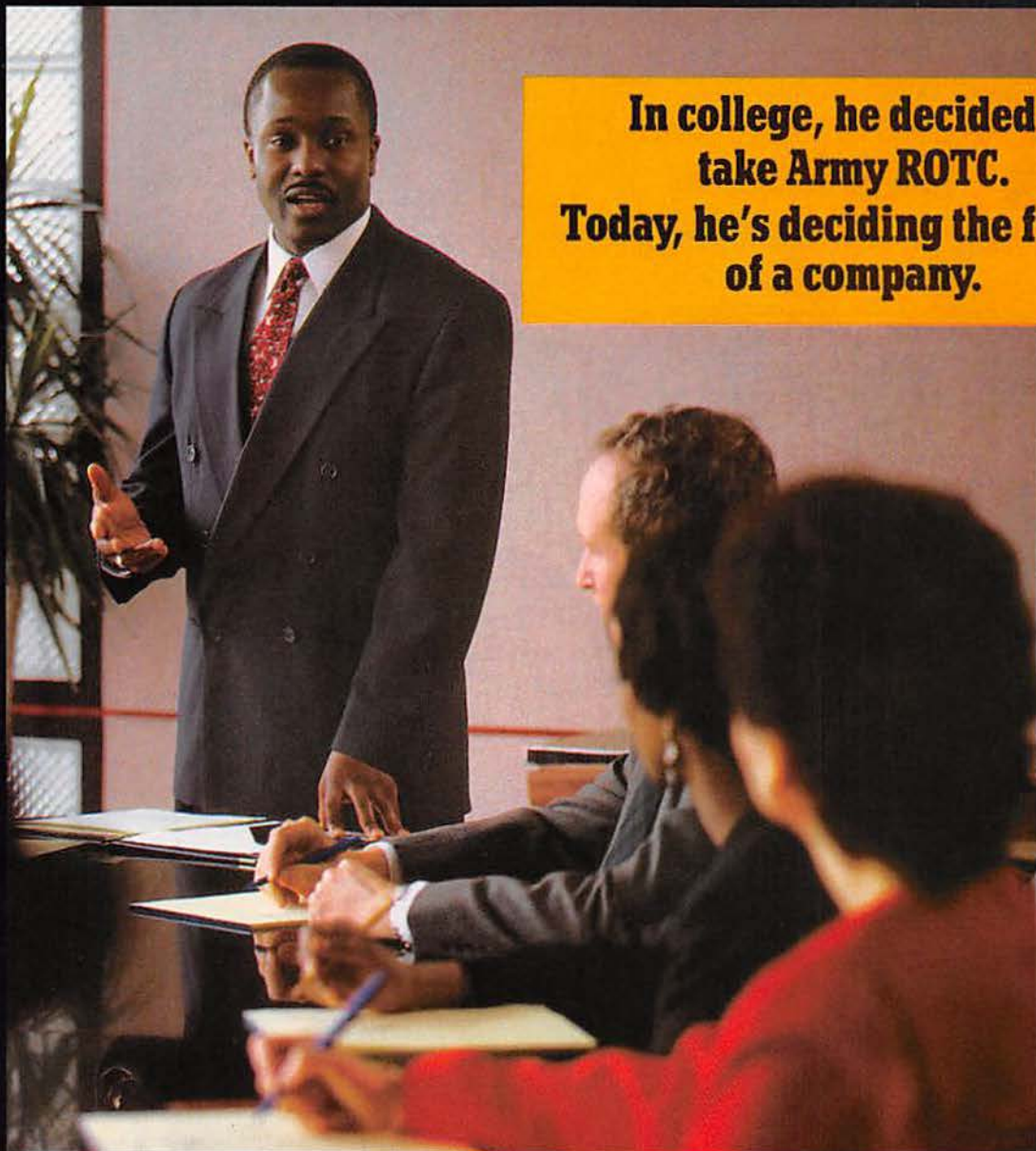
SPECIAL TEAMS The Raiders took a dive last season as both kicker Jeff Jaeger and punter Jeff Gossett failed to rank in the top 10. Both can be clutch. Jaeger nailed both his 50-yard attempts, and Gossett has gone four seasons without a block. Tim Brown and Kaufman will be among the NFL leaders in returns. **Grade: B+**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Wherever the Raiders play, in Anaheim or the Coliseum, Al Davis has given this aging team another playoff shot. A coaching change had to be made because of all the turmoil on offense. John Fox was solid on defense. White has wanted this opportunity for years and won't blow it. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-8



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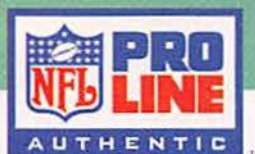
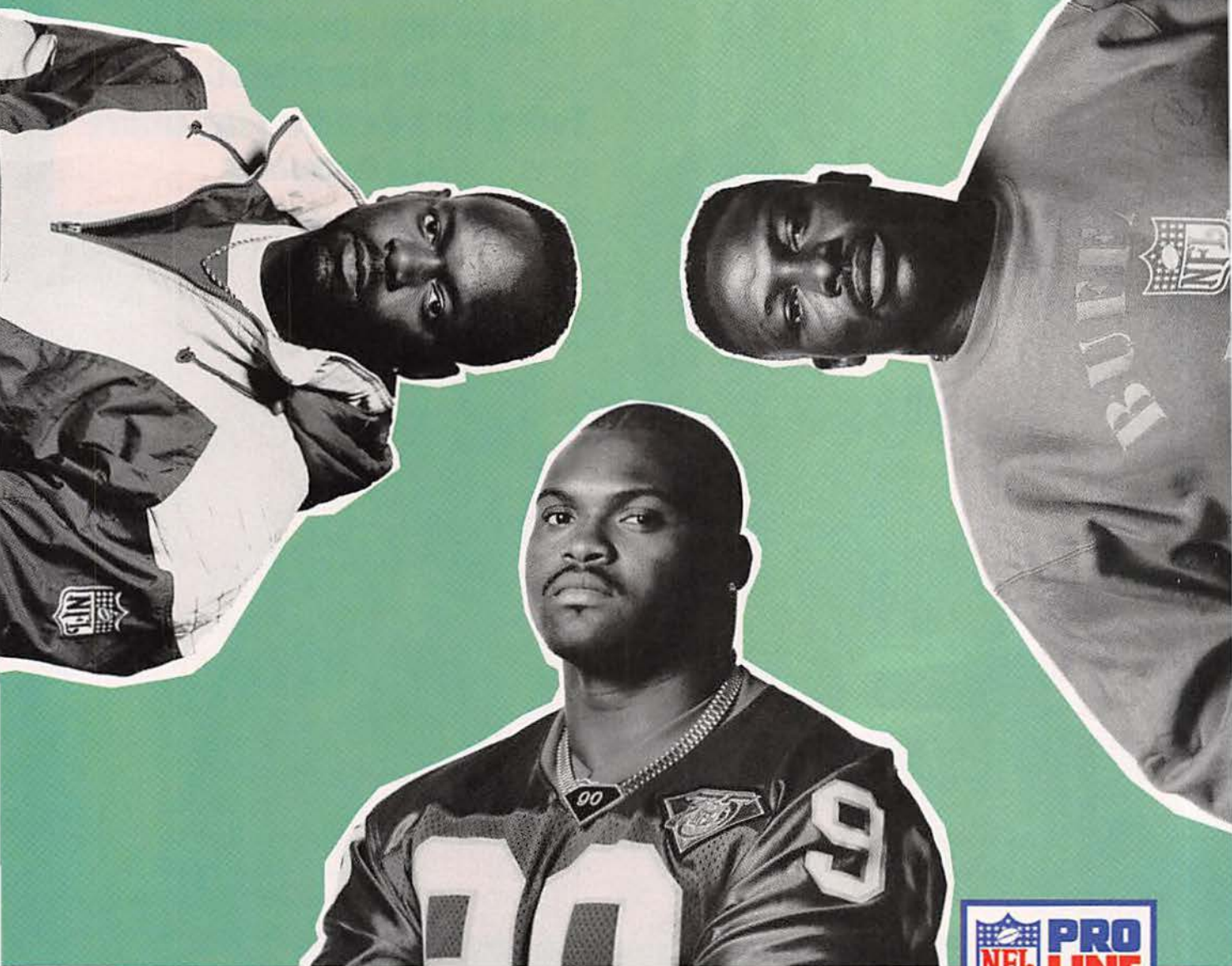
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1995 OVERVIEW When general manager Bobby Beathard ran the Redskins, the NFC East was football's best. Now the AFC West is the NFL's most competitive, talented division. The Chargers have won the division twice in three years, are the defending AFC champions, and still get no respect. That's their battle cry.



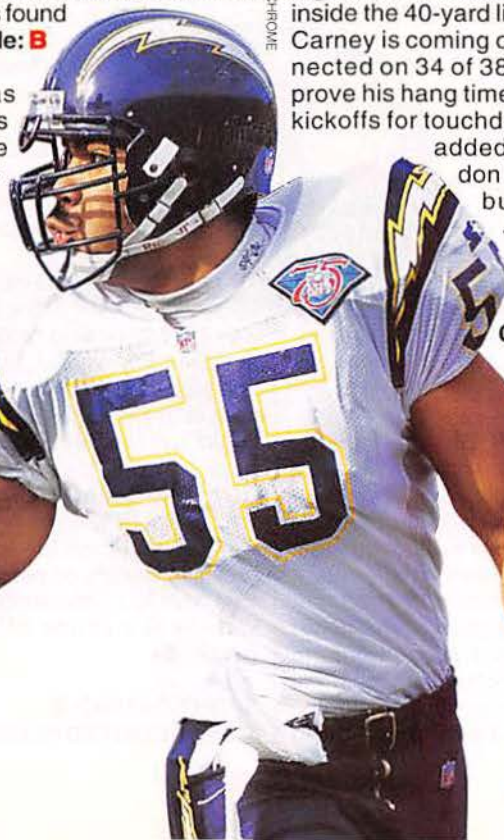
QUARTERBACK Stan Humphries throws the deep ball as well as anyone. He had 42 passes of 32 yards or longer last season. Humphries loves San Diego's patient style of pounding the ball and then going deep. The front office privately was delighted that Humphries' dislocated elbow forced him into the weight room and off the golf course during the off-season. He's never been fond of working out. Humphries, 30, is coming off his finest season, having thrown for 3,209 yards. Gale Gilbert remains the backup. **Grade: A-**

RUNNING BACK Behind the double tight end formation, Natrone Means invariably finds a hole. Means averaged almost four yards a carry and scored 12 touchdowns last season, gaining 399 of his 1,350 yards in the fourth quarter. Humphries threw the ball more to Means (39 receptions), taking some away from Ronnie Harmon (58). Harmon's \$1.5 million cap number might affect his roster spot, which explains why 5-foot-8 Terrell Fletcher was drafted. Fletcher was considered the best third-down back prospect in the draft. **Grade: A**

RECEIVERS The trio of Mark Seay, Shawn Jefferson and Tony Martin combined for 151 receptions, a 14.3-yard average, last season. Until the Super Bowl, Martin had a great postseason. Still, this remains the most unheralded receiving corps among the playoff teams. Beathard believes that if Martin continues to work hard, he'll be a 1,000-yard receiver. He did have a 99-yarder last season and scored seven touchdowns, one more than Seay. Alfred Pupunu, the H-back, is a factor in the passing game, as the Steelers found out in the AFC title game. **Grade: B**

OFFENSIVE LINE This has become one of the team's strongest groups, and the overall depth could be excep-

If any linebacker can point Cinderella to another Super year, it's the powerful, versatile Seau.



tional should Eric Moten (ankle) return. Courtney Hall holds the line together at center. Isaac Davis dominated Miami's Tim Bowens in the playoffs and starts his second season at left guard. Harry Swayne slipped a bit last season, but remains a polished pass blocker. Eric Jonassen at right tackle is the weakest link among the starters. Moten may go to tackle, leaving solid Joe Cocozzo at guard. **Grade: B**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS The Chargers have the game's premier linebacker in Junior Seau, who led the team in tackles for the fourth consecutive season. Seau lines up inside, shielded by monster tackles Shawn Lee and Reuben Davis, allowing him to use his tremendous speed. Leslie O'Neal might be a strange person off the field, but he's all business on: 41 sacks the last three seasons. Chris Mims and Raylee Johnson are versatile rushers in nickel situations. Linebacker David Griggs and Dennis Gibson are average athletes who play the system very well. **Grade: A**

SECONDARY The Chargers lost all their safeties and didn't flinch. Ex-Bear Shaun Gayle will open at strong safety, while Rodney Harrison, a special-teams sensation as a rookie, figures to battle Houston's Bo Orlando at free safety, where Stanley Richard once roamed. In Dave Adolph's system, Darrien Gordon and Dwayne Harper figure to play more bump-and-run. Harper struggled at times last season, finishing with eight interference penalties. Willie Clark and rookie Terrance Shaw will be the nickel backs. Shaw is considered an excellent cover cornerback. **Grade: C+**

SPECIAL TEAMS John Carney led the NFL in scoring last season with 135 points and was automatic inside the 40-yard line, nailing 27 straight field goals. Carney is coming off his finest season, having connected on 34 of 38 kicks. Bryan Wagner must improve his hang time. Andre Coleman returned three kickoffs for touchdowns last season, while Gordon added two more on punt returns. Gordon led the NFL with a 13.2 average, but might be replaced by rookie Jimmy Oliver, giving Gordon more time to concentrate on defense. **Grade: A**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Bobby Ross proved last season that he's as good as any coach in the NFL. Ross works late and never misses a detail. New defensive coordinator Adolph has the same work ethic as Ross. Beathard and Ross have a super working relationship. **Grade: A+**

**SPORT
RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED
RECORD: 10-6**

1995 OVERVIEW No team failed as miserably as Denver last season, but that hasn't dulled even higher expectations this season. New head coach Mike Shanahan returns with a more mature attitude. His design and play-calling in San Francisco last season left even Bill Walsh drooling. The defense will definitely improve (how can it not?), and Shanahan's offense will score plenty with John Elway and Co. The schedule is brutal: at Dallas, New England and Philadelphia.

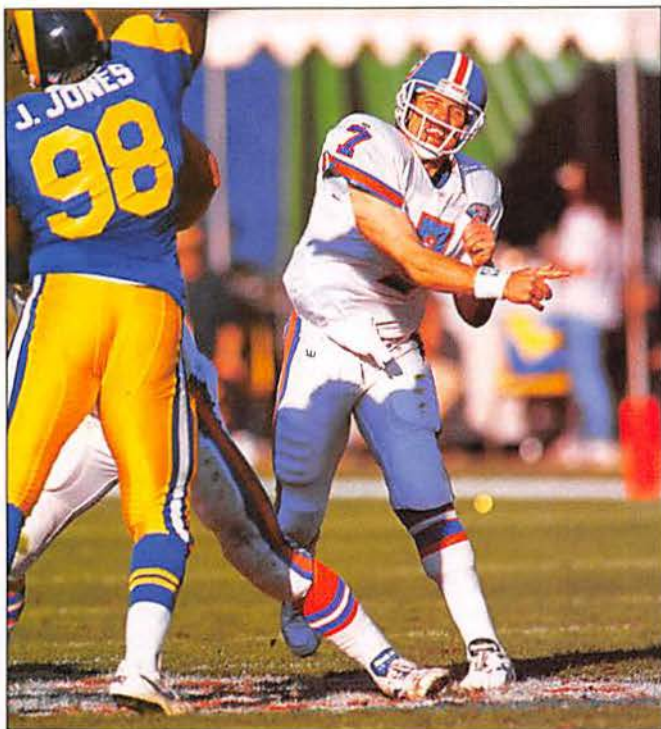
QUARTERBACK At 35, Elway only has a few good years left. He still tries to do too much, forcing himself into ridiculous errors. But no one can question his competitive nature. For two consecutive seasons, he's completed more than 60 percent of his passes, something he never accomplished in his first 10 seasons. Shanahan took Steve Young to another level last season; he can do the same with Big John. Bill Musgrave figures to edge Hugh Millen for backup duties. **Grade: A+**

RUNNING BACKS Rod Bernstine rumbled for 816 yards in '93, got hurt, and took a pay cut for '95. Gone is leading rusher Leonard Russell (620 yards and nine touchdowns), as Shanahan opts to have a competitive battle for the tailback spot between Glyn Milburn, Derrick Clark and newly acquired Aaron Craver. Milburn excels as a receiver (77 receptions last season), but must quit running sideways. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS Ex-Charger Anthony Miller figures to rebound from last season's confusion. Never was he an integral part of the offense, despite finishing with 1,107 yards. Tight end Shannon Sharpe is a dedicated, emotional leader who produces. He figures to equal last year's career highs—87 catches for 1,010 yards—because Elway trusts him. Mike Pritchard is expected to return after rupturing his kidney and missing 13 games. Tony Kimbrough and Derek Russell are above-average backups. **Grade: A+**

OFFENSIVE LINE Alex Gibbs, who adequately protected Elway on his first tour through Denver, is a coach capable of making this average group respectable. Left tackle Gary Zimmerman is the lone mainstay, but he's no longer a top-10 tackle. If healthy, Keith Kartz opens at center, allowing Tom Nalen to shift to either guard. Broderick Thompson left Philadelphia to become the right tackle. Guards Brian Habib and ex-Redskin Mark Schlereth (bad knees) struggle with powerful pass-rushers. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS The Broncos were caught in a time warp last season—no way Karl Mecklenburg and Mike Croel should have been playing—and they went after some experienced, tough guys. Two starters come via the Browns: James Jones, a raw kid with enormous inside pass-rush potential, and Michael Dean Perry. Mike Lodish will fit better at tackle, and Brit Hager is a natural middle linebacker who will be asked to play over the tight end. Simon Fletcher, with 36 sacks in the past three seasons, will fly from the weak side. Dan Williams could slide out to end, where Shane Dronett will be given one last



Elway's arm remains one of the game's best, but at 35, how long can the Broncos rely on his magic act?

chance. Denver has two young linebackers—Elijah Alexander and Keith Burns—who are ready to make a big impact if the front four does some damage. **Grade: C+**

SECONDARY Dennis Smith's finally gone after 14 seasons, including one call-back. Free safety Steve Atwater must hold this group together. Ex-Raider Lionel Washington and Ray Crockett will be the opening-day cornerbacks, although Randy Fuller and Ronnie Bradford will press them. Crockett, who last season never played as aggressively as he did in Detroit, returns to the left side. Darryl Hall and Tim Hauck rotated at strong safety in minicamps. Hauck is just too slow to stick in man coverage, but he hits like a bulldozer and is a smart performer. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS Jason Elam didn't suffer a sophomore slump. He was 22 of 22 on field goals inside the 40-yard line and also nailed a 54-yarder. Punter Tom Rouen's gross average slipped a bit, but his 39.25-yard net led the NFL. Milburn is an average kick/punt returner, although Butler By'not'e shows some promise. **Grade: B-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Shanahan almost didn't accept Pat Bowlen's offer. Still, he's the best coach for Bowlen, who loves Elway and a high-flying offense. The pressure is really on personnel guru Bob Ferguson, who took heat for overlooking the defense last season. Gary Kubiak is a young offensive coach on the rise. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: B
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 9-7





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Thomas and the Chiefs must tackle opponents without Montana, but they don't seem worried.

1995 OVERVIEW Joe Montana retired, which wasn't a shock, but the Chiefs don't seem concerned about it. They have total confidence in Steve Bono, who lost both of his starts last season. Marty Schottenheimer's club has made the playoffs the last five seasons, and he figures they should do it again. The best reason: His teams have owned the Raiders, winning 10 of the last 11 meetings, and Los Angeles is the favorite in the West once again.

QUARTERBACK The perennial backup, Bono now has his day in the sun. Entering his 11th season, he's 7-4 as a starter (three during the '87 replacement games). Bono's strength is that he understands Paul Hackett's modified version of the 49ers' offense. He did pass for 300-plus yards in both starts last season, and his career TD/interception ratio is a solid 24-to-15. Life would be easier if Montana were around to guide him. Matt Blundin has a stronger arm and spent time in the World League for development, but rookie Steve Stenstrom of Stanford fits the offense perfectly. **Grade: C-**

RUNNING BACKS Marcus Allen worked diligently in the off-season and wants to start; this will be his 14th season, third with the Chiefs. Allen rushed for 709 yards and seven touchdowns a year ago and remains a fine third-down back, but this must be Greg Hill's year. Hill had 574 yards last season and has more big-run potential than Allen. Donnell Bennett is coming off knee surgery or he'd be projected ahead of Kimble Anders at fullback. Anders, with 67 recep-

tions, was Montana's favorite target last season. **Grade: B**

RECEIVERS Lake Dawson's willingness to block reminds many of John Taylor, but now he must double his 37 receptions from last season. Dawson will go over the middle and won't look back. Willie Davis is the speedster, although his average slipped last season. Tight end Keith Cash has the ability to catch 70-80 balls, but he's never remained healthy for a full season. Victor Bailey left the Eagles to be the third wideout for the Chiefs and is reliable in the clutch. **Grade: C**

OFFENSIVE LINE The big change here was the hiring of ex-Raiders coach Art Shell as the position coach. Shell, a fine teacher, is more laid-back than the departed Alex Gibbs. Three of the five starters are in the final year of their contracts, and Will Shields figures to be restricted. Left tackle John Alt's disk problem in his back is another concern. Center Tim Grunhard is the best all-around blocker, while former Jet Jeff Criswell is an improvement at right tackle. Ricky Siglar is a capable reserve. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Schottenheimer will be meddling with the defense because he discarded veteran coaches for inexperienced ones. Eight teams managed to rush for more than 110 yards against the Chiefs; tackles Dan Saleaumua and linebackers George Jamison and Tracy Simien were soft against the run and need to be replaced. Right end Darren Mickell has super upfield quickness, complementing Neil Smith, who led the club with 11½ sacks. Outside linebacker Derrick Thomas is coming off his finest season. He forced six fumbles and had 45 quarterback pressures. Since 1989, Thomas leads the NFL with 77 sacks. **Grade: B+**

SECONDARY The wildest moves occurred here, as three potential starters arrived from the Jets. James Hasty and Brian Washington will open at right cornerback and strong safety, respectively, while Ronnie Lott's principal responsibility will be to show Dale Carter how to be a great pro. Carter has all the physical gifts, but his concentration at times has broken down on the field. Lott might be the nickel-defense quarterback, while cornerback Mark Collins is making a switch to free safety. Darren Anderson has some potential. **Grade: B**

SPECIAL TEAMS Lin Elliott only missed five field goals last season, but two of them came inside the 30-yard line. Louie Aguiar ranked in the bottom fourth of the league with a 34.5 net punting average. Tamarick Vanover, who played last season in the CFL, should handle both punt- and kick-return duties. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT For some reason, the Chiefs have never gotten over the hump. The same thing happened to Schottenheimer (5-9 playoff record) in Cleveland. Schottenheimer and general manager Carl Peterson feel good about this team, so maybe they know more than we do. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: B-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 8-8

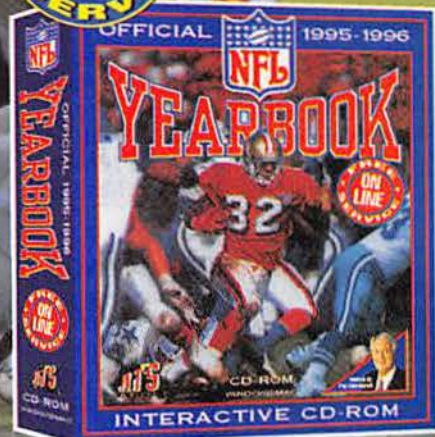


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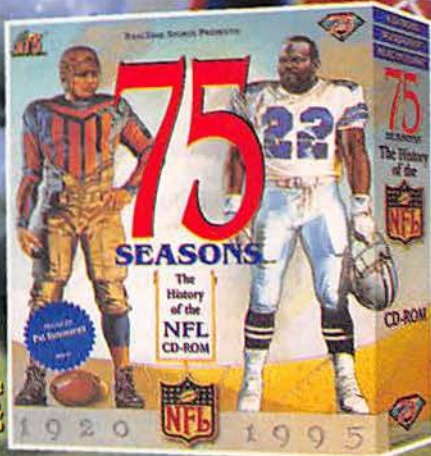
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1995 OVERVIEW New coach Dennis Erickson will make the Seahawks flashy on offense, and the Kingdome crowds will return. But the West is too tough to make an immediate win-loss impact. Erickson can't be as unlucky as Tom Flores, who lost an NFL-high 16 players to injury last season and ultimately lost his job. Emphasizing the change of direction, the defense will start eight players who were either injured or backups when '94 ended.

QUARTERBACK Before busting a thumb and missing the final three games, Rick Mirer didn't show much improvement from his rookie season. He does have a quick delivery, but he struggled when looking for secondary targets. New offensive coordinator Greg McMakin wants to simplify Mirer's reads to guarantee a quick release. The change should be good for Mirer, who stagnated under Flores. Mirer doesn't possess Drew Bledsoe's talents, but he needs to play smarter and become more accurate: His 51-percent completion rate in '94 simply won't do. **Grade: B-**

RUNNING BACKS Chris Warren, who scored 11 touchdowns last season, is shooting for his fourth consecutive 1,000-yard rushing season. Warren is both mentally and physically tough, having played with broken ribs last December. Warren, 26, dominates a game with powerful strides that created 41 runs of 10 yards or more in '94. To keep him fresh, Erickson would like to reduce his carries from last year's 374 to 300. Tracy Johnson and Steve Smith will be used in short-yardage situations as Seattle shifts to a three-receiver set. **Grade: A**

RECEIVERS The additions of ex-Cardinal Ricky Proehl and No. 1 pick Joey Galloway to complement sure-handed Brian Blades should put some fear in the opposition. Despite being in Buddy Ryan's doghouse, Proehl still managed 51 catches, five for touchdowns. He and Galloway should fly deep, allowing Blades to work the middle. Blades, a great possession receiver, has 161 receptions in two years. Galloway shined in two postseason games, and his speed should be effective on reverses. Rookie tight end Christian Fauria should push veteran Paul Green. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE After 10 starting seasons with the Jets, Jim Sweeney, 33, arrives to anchor the line at cen-



ter. Sweeney knows all the tricks too. On the left side, Ray Roberts and Jeff Blackshear will start. Both big guys have a tendency to false start. Kevin Mawae enters his second pro season as the right guard, where he played at the end of last season. Howard Ballard needs to watch his weight and make sure he isn't fooled in pass protection. **Grade: C-**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Cortez Kennedy's frustration should continue—10.5 sacks in two seasons—because there's no dominant speed rusher. Teams have effectively double-teamed Kennedy. Somehow, he and Sam Adams must stunt together the way John Randle and Henry Thomas used to in Minnesota. Brent Williams returns, while Antonio Edwards has speed, but lacks the finesse to make it work. Terry Wooden is a super gap-shooter and tackler. Winston Moss will cover the tight end, while Dean Wells replaces the departed Rod Stephens. **Grade: B+**

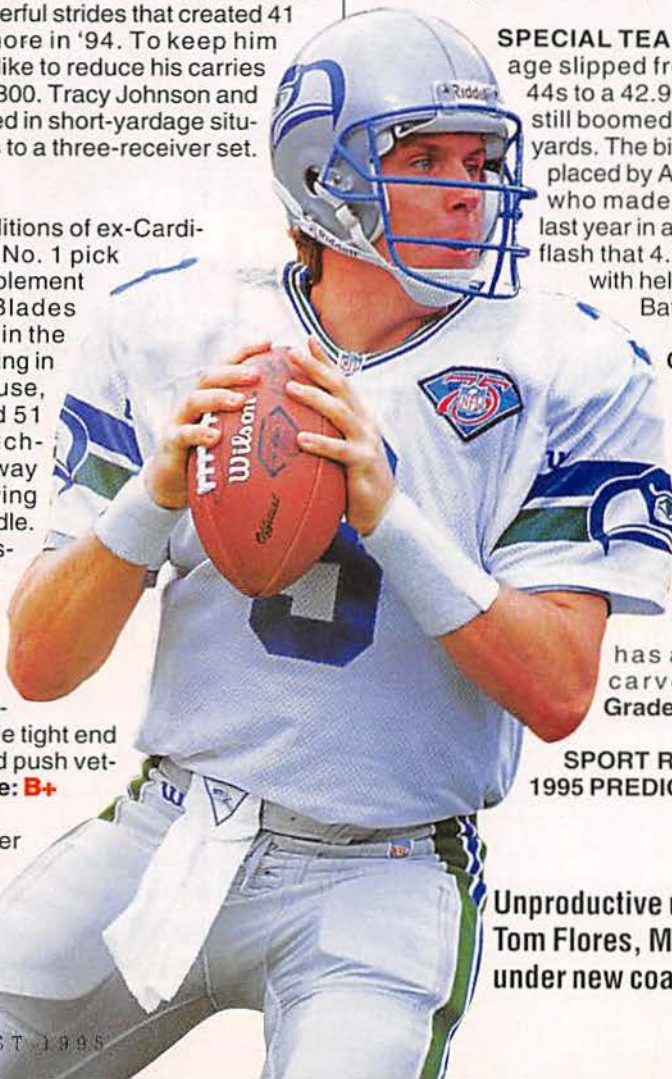
SECONDARY Nate Odomes, who missed all of last season with an off-season knee injury, returns at right cornerback; Carlton Gray, who forces the run well, will be on the left side. Both can play bump-and-run. When healthy, Robert Blackmon and Eugene Robinson are as talented as any safety combo in the AFC. Robinson finished third in tackles after leading the club two years ago. Corey Harris, formerly of the Packers, figures to be the nickel back, with Tony Covington another key reserve. **Grade: C-**

SPECIAL TEAMS Rick Tuten's average slipped from two seasons in the 44s to a 42.9 last season, though he still boomed 23 punts more than 50 yards. The big loss is John Kasay, replaced by Arizona's Todd Peterson, who made two of four field goals last year in a relief role. Galloway will flash that 4.2 speed on kick returns with help from holdover Michael Bates. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Erickson wanted out of Miami, where he won two national championships, and could prove to be a bargain. David Behring, the owner's son, has taken control of the front office, learning football on the job. The situation has allowed Erickson to carve out some control. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 5-11

Unproductive under former coach Tom Flores, Mirer looks to thrive under new coach Dennis Erickson.

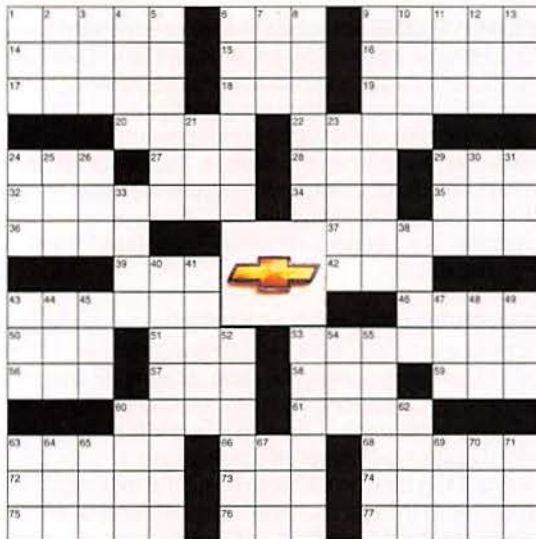


The Chevrolet Truck Across

SPORT word

Puzzle

By Stanley Newman



1. Dennis Connor's concerns
6. Ballclub execs: Abbr.
9. Marathoner Waitz
14. Yankees catcher Howard's nickname
15. Clemens stat
16. Propelled a scull
17. Permit, as runs to score
18. Ranger Gilbert
19. Lynn and Biletnikoff
20. ABA champ in '76
22. Jockey great's nickname
24. Caught ____ rundown: 2 wds.
27. Holtz or Groza
28. Football filler
29. Timid
32. Type of tennis
34. Fuel-economy letters
35. Globetrotters founder Saperstein
36. Vaughan of Cooperstown
37. Bing or Lanier, in '73
39. '17 NL battling champ Roush
42. Top AP ranking
43. Kind of golf bet
46. Holes in one
50. Bullfight cheer
51. Just hired
53. Gooden's nickname: 2 wds.
56. Bob Uecker's talent
57. Sugar Bowl winner in '64: Abbr.
58. It rhymes with "sis boom bah"
59. ____ skiing (off-the-slopes practice)
60. "Old ____" Radbourne
61. Speedskater Heiden
63. Ivy League school: 2 wds.
66. Luxury ____
68. "THE MOST DEPENDABLE, LONGEST-LASTING TRUCKS"
72. 157-tournament winner
73. Female sheep
74. Gold-medal winner at St. Moritz
75. Ewbank's namesakes
76. Catcher Crandall
77. Agenda elements

Down

1. Seattle ____ Hawks
2. With 7 Down, NFL star's designation
3. Holiday Bowl loser in '92: Abbr.
4. Columbia footballer
5. Eephus pitcher
6. Word on a boxing poster
7. See 2 Down
8. '20s Yankees pitcher ____ Jones: 2 wds.
9. '94 Kentucky Derby winner: 3 wds.
10. Like triple plays
11. Before, in poetry
12. '49 Wimbledon winner Schroeder
13. SPORT execs: Abbr.
21. Sneaker part
23. James Vaughn's nickname
24. Northwest school: Abbr.
25. Partner of neither
26. Arctic bird
29. Rode the bench
30. Cable network that's big on boxing
31. Dough for Oh
33. Tournament-qualifying exemptions
38. Word on a ticket
40. Charger in Canton: 2 wds.
41. Pitchers' battles
43. Immediately
44. He beat Bugner in Malaysia
45. Pitcher's position
47. Fenway fish
48. Drop a pop
49. Big ____ (Montana's conference)
52. Like some offensive opportunities
53. Home of the Dragons
54. Rower's need
55. PGA Senior Tour name: 2 wds.
60. Mr. Adderley
62. Lemon in the outfield
63. Wood used for archers' bows
64. Urban thoroughfare: Abbr.
65. "The Spaceman"
67. Reaction to a John Daly drive
69. Compass point: Abbr.
70. Pep
71. Marv Albert exclamation

See page 104 for Chevrolet Truck SPORTword Puzzle answers.

Unabbreviated Space.

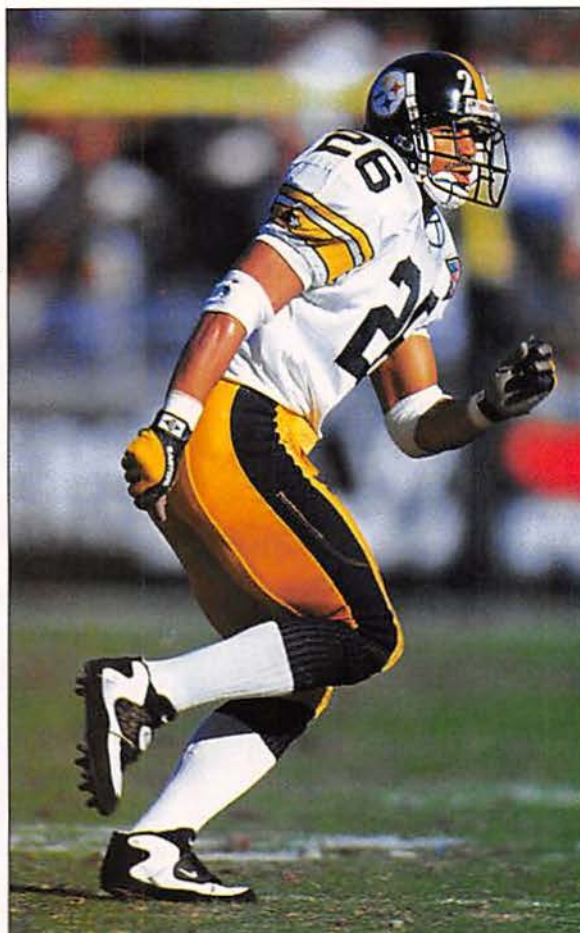


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With Woodson sealing off the corner, the Steelers are poised to shut down the AFC.

1995 OVERVIEW Talk about a pressure cooker. Steel-town fans believe overconfidence doomed their team last season. The Steelers won't escape the hype this summer, because Pittsburgh figures to be touted as the favorite—over the Raiders, Dolphins and Patriots—to be the AFC's Super Bowl representative next January in Phoenix.

QUARTERBACK Coach Bill Cowher's decision to firmly place last year's AFC title game in Neil O'Donnell's hands shocked some experts. O'Donnell set a championship game record for attempts (54) and completions (32) vs. San Diego only to have his final attempt knocked down. Cowher's confidence in O'Donnell's game made sense. In his last three playoff games, he has thrown for six touchdowns, no interceptions and 821 yards. At 29, the maturing O'Donnell is 30-19 as a starter. A sure sign of his smarts—this will be his fourth full season as the starter—is his league-low nine interceptions last season. **Grade: B+**

RUNNING BACKS One must assume that Barry Foster will be traded, allowing Bam Morris, last season's rookie sensation, to step in for the NFL's No. 1 rushing offense (136.25 yards per game in '94). Morris was outgained 851 to 836 by Foster last season, but beat Barry with seven touchdowns. Morris has the necessary combination of

quickness and strength (235 pounds) to excel in Pittsburgh's famed trapping game. Erric Pegram and John L. Williams, a perfect receiving pickup from Seattle a year ago, will figure prominently. **Grade: A**

RECEIVERS Charles Johnson, last year's No. 1 pick, has Lynn Swann's flamboyance and John Stallworth's guts. But Johnson, after leading the team with 38 receptions, was too immature to be a factor during the playoffs. Ernie Mills, a bona fide deep threat, impressed in the postseason with 13 receptions after averaging 20.2 yards a catch in 11 regular-season games. Andre Hastings and Yancey Thigpen, who combined for 14 starts last season, both have game-breaking potential. Lost through free agency was the production of tight end Eric Green, something rookie Mark Bruener could negate. **Grade: A-**

OFFENSIVE LINE Despite the loss of left guard Duval Love, who was replaced by another ex-Ram, Tom Newberry, this unit remains above average because of center Dermontti Dawson. Entering his eighth season, Dawson has become one of the game's most complete centers, and few can run with him on sweeps. Tackles John Jackson and Leon Searcy didn't miss a game last season, and both excel on pass blocking. Justin Strzelczyk is a powerful, versatile blocker who will battle Todd Kalis for a starting job. **Grade: B**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Probably the lone concerns are how long Kevin Greene, 33, and Greg Lloyd, 30, can stay hungry. Greene, an outside linebacker with wild eyes and long, blond locks, comes off an NFL-high 14-sack season. Lloyd, a complete linebacker, added 10 sacks to Pittsburgh's league-leading 55. Chad Brown is a top tackler (90 solos); no inside linebacker drops deeper into pass coverage. Left end Brentson Buckner shined as a rookie and epitomizes the quick, athletic players Cowher loves on his defensive line. **Grade: A**

SECONDARY The versatility of this group allows new defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau, a defensive back at heart, to refine and continue Dom Capers' style. Rod Woodson ranks among the NFL's elite players. Free safety Darren Perry, who likes to play center field, was the top interceptor a year ago with seven. Woodson and youngster Deon Figures anchor the corners, both equally adept at man coverage and forcing the run. Strong safety Carnell Lake must be re-signed. **Grade: A+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Rohn Stark, the Colts' all-time punting leader with a 43.5 average, replaces Mark Royals despite his inexperience outdoors. Gary Anderson missed two of 18 field goal attempts inside 40 yards, and his kickoffs ranked seventh best. Anderson's 309 field goals rank fourth all time. **Grade: B+**

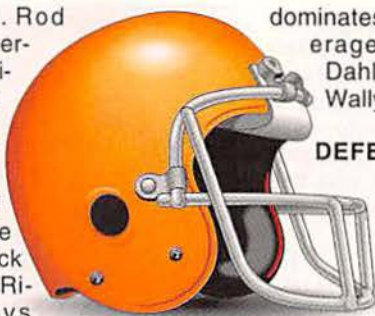


COACHING/MANAGEMENT Cowher, signed through the 1997 season, is only the sixth NFL coach in league history to earn a playoff berth in his first three seasons.

Owner Dan Rooney and football administrator Tom Donahoe deserve all the credit for choosing Cowher (32-16 record). **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 12-4

1995 OVERVIEW Andre Rison vs. Rod Woodson, that's the billboard. Remembering Paul Warfield, the Browns believe Rison is the special weapon needed to unseat the Steelers and finally put Art Modell in a Super Bowl. It's a heavy burden considering Rison has been a problematic performer off the field and Vinny Testaverde has reminded no one of Otto Graham. How coach Bill Belichick handles a sometimes unconventional Rison could be as critical as Rison vs. Woodson.



dominates at right tackle. This is an above-average and deep group, fortified by Bob Dahl, Herman Arvie, Gene Williams and Wally Williams. **Grade: B+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Belichick leaned on some ex-Giants last season, and they paid huge dividends. Pepper Johnson will again man the middle, and Carl Banks figures to return for less money. If not, Mike Caldwell and Travis Hill

should be more than adequate replacements. Michael Dean Perry's career is on the downside, so it made sense to release him. The big loss was defensive tackle James Jones. But the front line remains adequately manned with Rob Burnett (10 sacks in '94), Anthony Pleasant, Dan Footman and Bill Johnson. Burnett and Johnson are powerful pass-rushers. **Grade: B**

QUARTERBACK In the three losses to the Steelers last season, Testaverde self-destructed, unloading eight of his 18 interceptions in those games. Although most of the league has its doubts, Belichick believes Testaverde (10-6 as the starter in '94) is a winner and can be a champion. But with a game on the line (fourth quarter), Testaverde had the NFL's worst completion percentage (32.4) last season. **Grade: C**

RUNNING BACKS Leroy Hoard had four so-so years in Cleveland until the Browns finally featured him in the last seven regular-season games, and he responded with 623 yards. He also scored nine touchdowns, and the Browns rewarded him with a new four-year contract. Cleveland anticipates using multiple sets this season, expecting injured fullback Tommy Vardell to return. Some feel Hoard will disappear now that he has a rich contract. For insurance, the Browns acquired Lorenzo White, the Oilers' leading rusher in '94. **Grade: B-**

RECEIVERS Granted, Rison's numbers were helped by the pass-oriented offense in Atlanta, but there's no ignoring his averages over the last five seasons: 85 catches for 1,127 yards and 11 touchdowns. Jerry Rice may be the best, but Rison isn't far behind, and he's never had a Montana to throw him the ball. Rison had a better receiving average outdoors last season, and his competitiveness must be respected: He tallied 24 of his 81 receptions when his team trailed by seven or fewer points. Derrick Alexander, who had 828 receiving yards in his rookie season in '94, will keep the pressure off Rison. **Grade: A**

OFFENSIVE LINE The main reason there's hope for Testaverde lies in his blockers, which allowed an NFL-low 14 sacks last season. Left tackle Tony Jones and center Steve Everitt are this group's leaders. Jones can be fickle, though, and he's spent the off-season talking about retiring. Everitt is a firebrand and one of the game's top five centers. Orlando Brown, at 6-7 and 330,

SECONDARY The starters, collectively, are the equal of Pittsburgh's, and some say they are the NFL's best group. Stevon Moore, Belichick's favorite player, and Eric Turner are an impressive duo at safety. Moore finished first and third in tackles the past two seasons, respectively, and rarely blows his defensive responsibility. Turner is coming off a career season in which he tied for the NFL lead with nine interceptions. Both are punishing tacklers. Antonio Langham, a No. 1 pick last year, responded when picked on (29 passes defended) and is cut from the Mike Haynes mold. Dana Hall comes over from the 49ers. **Grade: A+**

SPECIAL TEAMS Few can remember a Browns highlight film that didn't include an Eric Metcalf punt return for a touchdown.

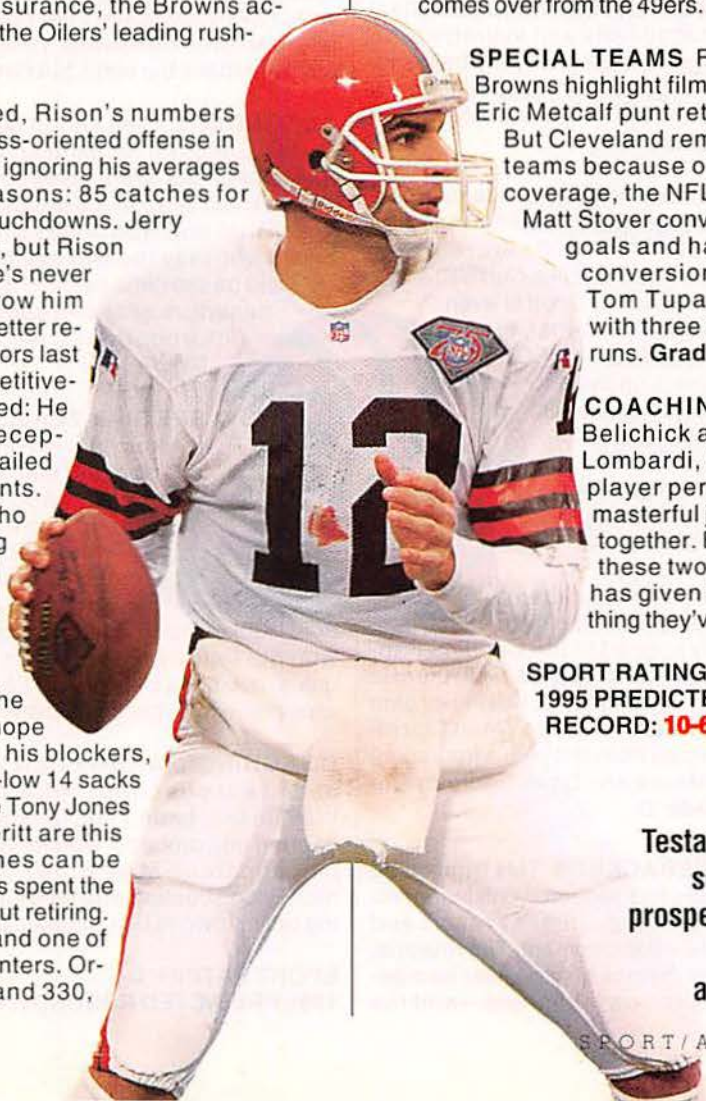
But Cleveland remains solid on special teams because of its kickers and kick coverage, the NFL's finest last season.

Matt Stover converted 20 straight field goals and had an NFL-high 92.9 conversion mark, while punter Tom Tupa provided versatility with three two-point conversion runs. **Grade: B**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Belichick and sidekick Michael Lombardi, the club's director of player personnel, have done a masterful job putting the pieces together. But now the onus is on these two, as owner Art Modell has given them virtually everything they've wanted. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: B+
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-6

Testaverde has tended to self-destruct, but the prospects for a big season have risen with the acquisition of Rison.



1995 OVERVIEW The future looks bright with young stars like Jeff Blake, Carl Pickens, Darnay Scott, Dan "Big Daddy" Wilkinson and No. 1 pick Ki-Jana Carter. Then reality sets in and you ask: Can David Shula, who has 11 victories in three coaching seasons, create a passion for success? But there remains hope because this organization has been to two Super Bowls; nine franchises have failed to get there once.

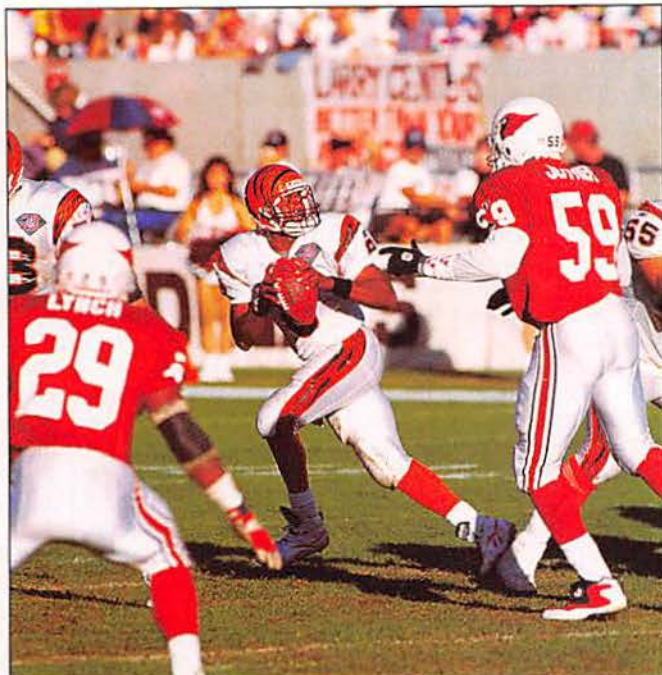
QUARTERBACK There were moments last season when Blake fired deep like a young Dan Marino. Blake produced excitement in Riverfront Stadium and made the selection of No. 1 pick David Klingler look awful by comparison. In 24 starts, Klingler produced four wins and 15 touchdown passes. Blake, unwanted by the Jets, started nine games and won three, throwing 14 touchdown passes. In four Blake losses, the Bengals lost by two, three, four and seven points. Blake must improve his reads. Still, his 38.7 conversion rate on third down was double what Klingler managed. **Grade: C+**

RUNNING BACKS The Bengals committed 41 turnovers last season, so it made sense to dump Harold Green, Steve Broussard and Derrick Fenner and secure Penn State's Carter, the draft's top choice. Combined, Green, Fenner and Broussard totaled 1,094 yards rushing. Carter, who has game-breaking speed and inside toughness, gained more than 1,500 yards last season, scoring 23 touchdowns and averaging 7.8 yards a carry. Ex-Charger Eric Bieniemy will be the insurance back, while ex-Eagle James Joseph lines up at fullback. All three should excel in Bruce Coslet's controlled passing game. **Grade: B+**

RECEIVERS The definite strength of the team. Pickens bettered Isaac Curtis' club record with 11 touchdown catches and produced five 100-yard receiving games in '94. Pickens can go deep like Curtis used to, but second-year receiver Darnay Scott is even faster. Pickens may play the ball better, but Scott's 18.8-yard average led the AFC. With some game-breakers on the outside, the Bengals will be guaranteed an underneath game because of the emergence of tight end Tony McGee (40 catches for 492 yards) and the arrival of Ex-Bear Tom Waddle, an excellent third-down receiver. **Grade: A-**

OFFENSIVE LINE The line was shattered by injuries last season, and to compound matters, line coach Jim McNally jumped to the Carolina Panthers and right tackle Joe Walter retired. Still, there is something to build upon. The tackles, Kevin Sargent and Bruce Kozerski, are above average. What Cincinnati needs are solid seasons from last year's free-agent signees: guards Eric Moore and Dave Cadigan and center Darrick Brilz. **Grade: D**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS This front could make tremendous strides this season if Wilkinson, Alfred Williams, John Copeland, James Francis and Steve Tovar continue their improvement. Tim Krumrie, an overachieving player, begins his first year as a defensive line coach; he knows technique—and the



Unwanted by the Jets, Blake produced excitement in Cincy by firing 15 TD passes in an abbreviated stint.

blockers in this division. Wilkinson closed the season with a two-sack game after opening the year in bust-like fashion. Francis and Williams have the athletic ability to make big plays but rarely do. **Grade: B**

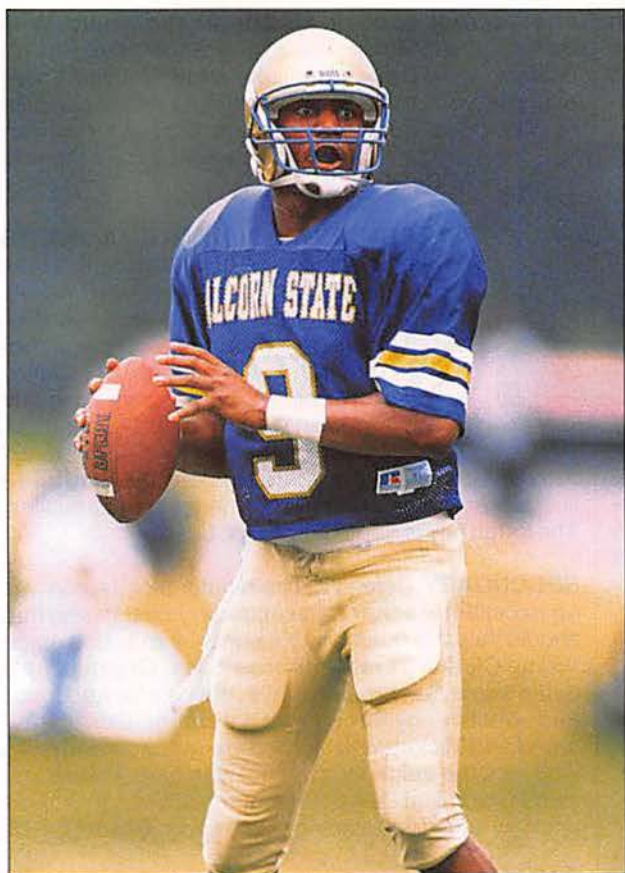
SECONDARY Free safety Darryl Williams is a potential superstar, coming off two consecutive 100-tackle seasons. Corey Sawyer was a gambling cornerback last season; he needs to play more focused. Mike Brim and Rod Jones are competent cornerbacks who play too soft at times. Leonard Wheeler should be the dime back. The unit took a hit with the departure of strong safety Louis Oliver (three interceptions), who signed with Miami. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS Cincinnati allowed five touchdowns on kick returns last season, but blame the tacklers, not the kickers, who were super. Lee Johnson lost the AFC punting race to Jeff Gossett, who had a 43.857 average to Johnson's 43.810. That's a difference of 1.69 inches per punt. Kicker Doug Pelfrey made everyone forget Jim Breech. Pelfrey converted 84.8 percent of his field goals, making a club-record 28, and all three Bengals wins came from his foot. **Grade: B+**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT The club's two best assistant coaches, Jim McNally and Richard Williamson, bailed out, leaving David Shula short-handed and probably wondering if Bruce Coslet is his heir apparent. Mike Brown needs to spend more money on scouting and less time talking about trucking out of town to Los Angeles or Baltimore. **Grade: C**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 7-9





Strong-armed rookie McNair may be rushed into battle because of a solid line to protect him.

1995 OVERVIEW With the exception of division rivals Pittsburgh and Cleveland, the Oilers won't face a Super Bowl contender this year. The schedule won't give youthful coach Jeff Fisher, 37, gray hairs, although his team might. Houston is a mixed bag of age and hopeful youth. The Oilers are closer to last year's 2-14 club, which lost 11 straight, than to the 1993 division champions that finished 12-4. The pressure is on Jerry Rhome, the new offensive coordinator, to convert the leftover run-and-shoot personnel into a highly competitive pro-set attack.

QUARTERBACK Rhome, with Fisher's blessing, secured ex-Ram Chris Chandler, a player Rhome coached back in Arizona, to be the Oilers backup quarterback just in case Cody Carlson doesn't successfully make the back-drop transition. Carlson failed miserably as the starter last season, converting 44.7 percent of his attempts and throwing only one touchdown. With three different starters, Houston didn't have one 300-yard passing game. The pass offense ranked 25th, the total offense 26th. Steve McNair, the top pick, already has a better arm than any quarterback in camp. He could be rushed into battle because the offensive line is above average. **Grade: C-**

RUNNING BACKS An ankle injury hampered Gary Brown's progress last season. He's a diligent worker and should return to his 1,000-yard form of '93. With the departure of Lorenzo White to the Browns, playing split backs and benching fullback John Henry Mills makes sense. **Grade: C**



RECEIVERS The best news is that tight ends Pat Carter and last season's top rookie, Roderick Lewis, figure mightily in the offensive plans. Both can catch and are proven blockers. Despite feuding with Fisher last season, Webster Slaughter had 18 of his team-high 68 receptions in the final three games. Slaughter, and especially Earnest Givins, suffered from the lack of consistency at the quarterback position. Timing patterns were unequivocal disasters. Givins (36 catches, one TD) was released. **Grade: C**

OFFENSIVE LINE In true Texas fashion, owner Bud Adams wanted to outdo Cowboys owner Jerry Jones at something and settled for stealing center Mark Stepnoski. The ex-Cowboy, possibly the NFL's quickest center, adds strength and allows the Oilers more flexibility along the offensive line. Bruce Matthews, who can play anywhere, will shift to left guard, extending the 34-year-old Pro Bowler's career. Kevin Donnalley and Erik Norgard will battle at right guard, while David "Babygate" Williams has started 26 consecutive games at right tackle. Brad Hopkins continues to struggle with quick pass-rushing ends at left tackle. Houston allowed a league-worst 65 sacks last season because of quarterback incompetence. **Grade: B**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Enter new defensive coordinator Steve Sidwell, who will interject some sanity into Fisher's 46 defense. Ray Childress, who turns 33 in October, is slipping at defensive tackle, and youngsters Jeremy Nunley and Henry Ford have only shown flashes of ability. Kenny Davidson is simply average at left end. Al Smith once again led Houston in tackles. **Grade: B-**

SECONDARY Two years ago, right cornerback Darryl Lewis had a bum knee. Thanks to secondary bidding wars, Lewis received \$8 million over four years to re-sign after leading the club with five interceptions. However, Lewis isn't fond of sticking his head into a pile. Trash-talking Cris Dishman could be shoved aside by Steve Jackson at left cornerback. Strong safety Blaine Bishop's superior play made Bubba McDowell expendable, while Marcus Robertson plays a splendid center field and is a certified head knocker. **Grade: B-**

SPECIAL TEAMS The addition of Detroit's Mel Gray guarantees improvement to the punt and kick return teams, which ranked 28th and 23rd, respectively, last season. Although Gray is 34, he led the NFC in kick returns last season, and his career averages are 11.5 yards on punts and 24.8 on kickoffs. Rich Camarillo punted a club-record 96 times last season, placing 35 inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Kicker Al Del Greco was superb last season, leading the NFL with a 37.4-yard field goal average. **Grade: A**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Ownership isn't totally convinced that Fisher is the man, but it did allow him to hire a splendid staff. Sidwell and Rhome are veteran coordinators who will provide reasoned sounding boards for Fisher. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 5-11

1995 OVERVIEW No one has worked harder in preparation for this season than Jaguars head coach Tom Coughlin. The man is consumed by football, and owner Wayne Weaver hasn't interfered in any decisions. The Jaguars, who will have only three starters over 30, have a chance to win more games than Carolina because the AFC is softer. There are two critical keys to winning five or six games: how the players respond to Coughlin's often tyrannical demeanor and whether Steve Beuerlein can stay healthy for 16 games.

QUARTERBACK Beuerlein, 21-20 as an NFL starter, entered Buddy Ryan's doghouse after the first game last season and was cast adrift for personal, not professional, reasons. Beuerlein reminds some of Phil Simms, especially the competitive side. He's tough, savvy in the pocket and a natural leader, all necessary ingredients for someone quarterbacking an expansion team. Lefty Mark Brunell reminds many of a young Steve Young, and Green Bay's coaches hated to trade him. Brunell has tremendous potential, meaning that rookie Rob Johnson may be holding a clipboard for years. **Grade: B-**

RUNNING BACKS Reggie Cobb returns to Florida, where he had three good seasons with Tampa Bay. He looked a step slow in Green Bay, averaging only 3.5 per carry and rarely getting outside. Cobb is a solid pro, though, a perfect sidekick for rookie James Stewart, the No. 1 pick from Tennessee. A lot of clubs loved Stewart, who has super vision, a nice wiggle and gives that extra effort. He can't block, and he probably won't be asked to either. **Grade: D**

RECEIVERS The Redskins gave up on Desmond Howard just when he was beginning to show some flashes of his Heisman form. Howard had 727 receiving yards last season, an 18.2-yard average, and could improve on that. Kelvin Martin may lack game-breaking speed, but he's sure-handed (56 catches last year in Seattle) and a precise pass-route runner. Tight end Derek Brown has ability, but the Giants just didn't believe he had the heart for football, nor the hands of Aaron Pierce. Charles Davenport and Cedric Tillman are above-average backups. **Grade: C-**

OFFENSIVE LINE Without playing a game, No. 1 pick Tony Boselli might be the best lineman on the team. Boselli has great feet, leverage and tenacity. Coughlin loved his character and his wish to be with an expansion club. Brian DeMarco,

another rookie, could also break the lineup. With Boselli at left tackle, the Jaguars will have Shawn Bouwens and Dave Widell at guards. Bouwens handles everyone but Reggie White, and Widell can also play tackle. Eugene Chung was too soft for Bill Parcells, but he's quick and should be the right tackle. **Grade: D**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS

There is some pass-rush talent with ex-Jet Jeff Lageman and Detroit's Kelvin Pritchett. Both are capable of 10-sack seasons. It's the mix around them that's troublesome. Joel Smeenge, Don Davey and Paul Frase are merely adequate linemen with no upside potential.

Middle linebacker Keith Goganious makes too many plays downfield, and outside linebacker James Williams runs better than he tackles. The tough guy is Santo Stephens. **Grade: C**

SECONDARY Defensive coordinator Dick Jauron was an excellent teacher as a secondary coach, and that should help this questionable bunch. Expansion made Vinnie Clark a \$1 million cornerback. Granted, he'll make some outstanding plays, but he's lacked focus and consistency throughout his career. Corey Raymond and Mickey Washington are gutsy cornerbacks who lack the quickness to deal with game-breakers. Harry Colon and Darren Carrington are capable backups now forced into starting safety spots. **Grade: D**

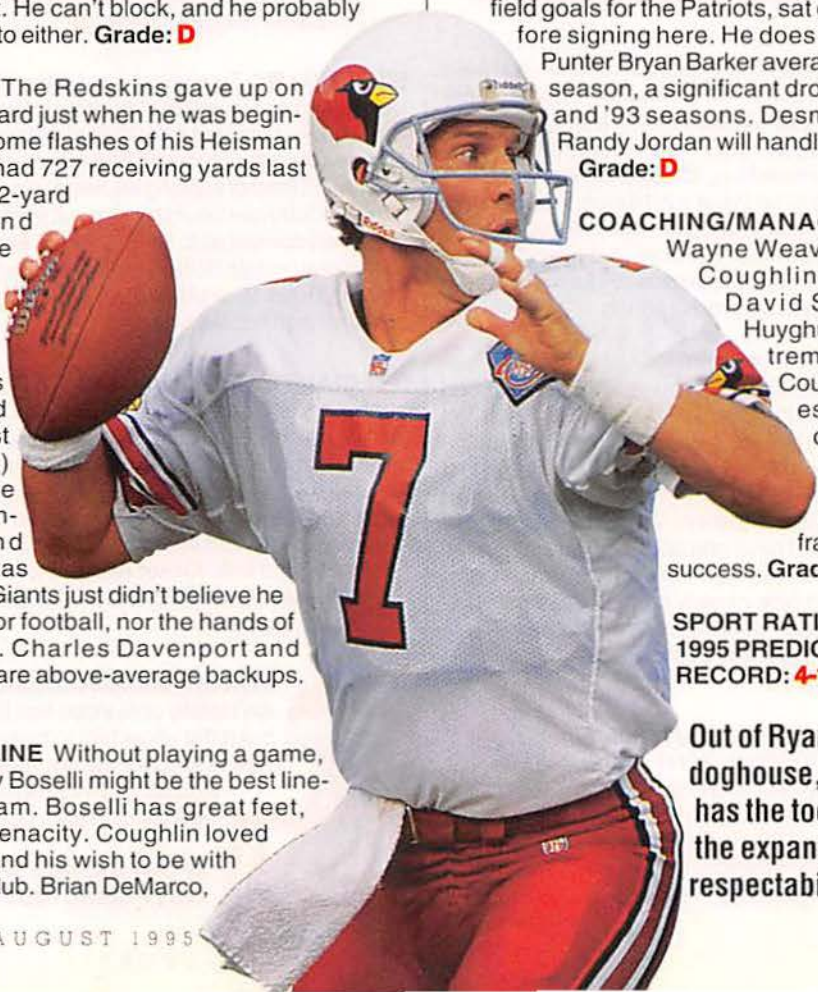
SPECIAL TEAMS Unlike Carolina, the Jaguars are gambling with their kickers. Scott Sisson, who was banned from Boston after missing two game-winning field goals for the Patriots, sat out last season before signing here. He does have a strong leg. Punter Bryan Barker averaged 40.8 yards last season, a significant dropoff from his 1992 and '93 seasons. Desmond Howard and Randy Jordan will handle the return duties. **Grade: D**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT

Owner Wayne Weaver has given Tom Coughlin and executives David Seldin, Michael Huyghue and John Jones tremendous freedom. Coughlin isn't the easiest man to work for; consequently, how he reacts once the losses pile up will be critical to this franchise's long-term success. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: D
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 4-12

Out of Ryan's doghouse, Beuerlein has the tools to lead the expansion Jags to respectability.



1995 OVERVIEW The Patriots, winners of seven straight at the end of last season, will be ready for the playoffs. Bill Parcells doesn't have all the pieces in place, but enough to beat Miami and win the East for the first time since 1986. Drew Bledsoe, the next reigning superstar, won't be in a comeback mode all the time with Dave Meggett in his backfield. Parcells loves to control the clock, and the Patriots will, thus controlling their future.



QUARTERBACK With Bledsoe, the Patriots are never out of a game. He set two NFL passing records last season—691 attempts for the year and 45 completions in a single game. This season, his overall numbers will decline because the Pats won't always be in a panic, trailing. Bledsoe will be in control, and Parcells doesn't want him tossing 27 interceptions as he did last season. The young man has a rocket arm and seems to have been born with poise and a flair for the dramatic. **Grade: A+**

RUNNING BACKS The acquisition of Meggett figures to be more effective than last season's arrival of Marion Butts. Meggett not only has third-down flash, but he can run between the tackles. He should be an effective receiver, forcing defenses to single-cover tight end Ben Coates. The lone drawback is the grass; many feel Meggett is a better turf runner. Butts was a disappointment last season, averaging 3.24 yards on 126 first-and-10 runs, fifth-worst in the NFL. Pitt rookie Curtis Martin, a Meggett clone who rushed for more than 1,000 yards in 1993, could replace Butts. **Grade: B+**

RECEIVERS Tight end Ben Coates has a chance to rewrite all the record books. There isn't a linebacker or strong safety who can consistently stop him. Coates caught an NFL-record 96 passes last season. Vincent Brisby probably will be joined by Kevin Lee now that Michael Timpson is in Chicago. Lee, who has 4.4 speed, broke his jaw last summer and missed the whole season. Brisby caught 58 passes last season, and Ray Crittenden added 28. **Grade: B+**

OFFENSIVE LINE The Patriots couldn't run last season because the line suddenly went soft. Ex-Dolphins center Jeff Delenbach should shore up the middle, especially with ex-Giant Bob Kratch alongside

and fast-improving Todd Rucchi at the other guard. Bledsoe's vision should be clear. Despite the run-toughness question, the unit allowed only 22 sacks. Pat Harlow is coming off a disappointing season. Bruce Armstrong is solid, but no longer dominant. Dellenbach was a perfect choice because his loss hurts rival Miami. **Grade: C+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS

The line spent the off-season playing musical chairs. Nose tackles Ray Agnew and Tim Goad were lost and replaced by Reggie White (the one from San Diego) and Tim Roberts. Mike Jones, Mike Pitts and Aaron Jones need to work on their two-gap techniques because the linebackers are the playmakers. Chris Slade has had 19 sacks in his first two pro seasons, and Willie McGinest should also be flying from the left side. Vincent Brown (82 unassisted tackles last year) should make it two consecutive Pro Bowls, and Todd Collins returns from injury. Linebacker Marty Moore, who started four games last year, adds depth. **Grade: B**

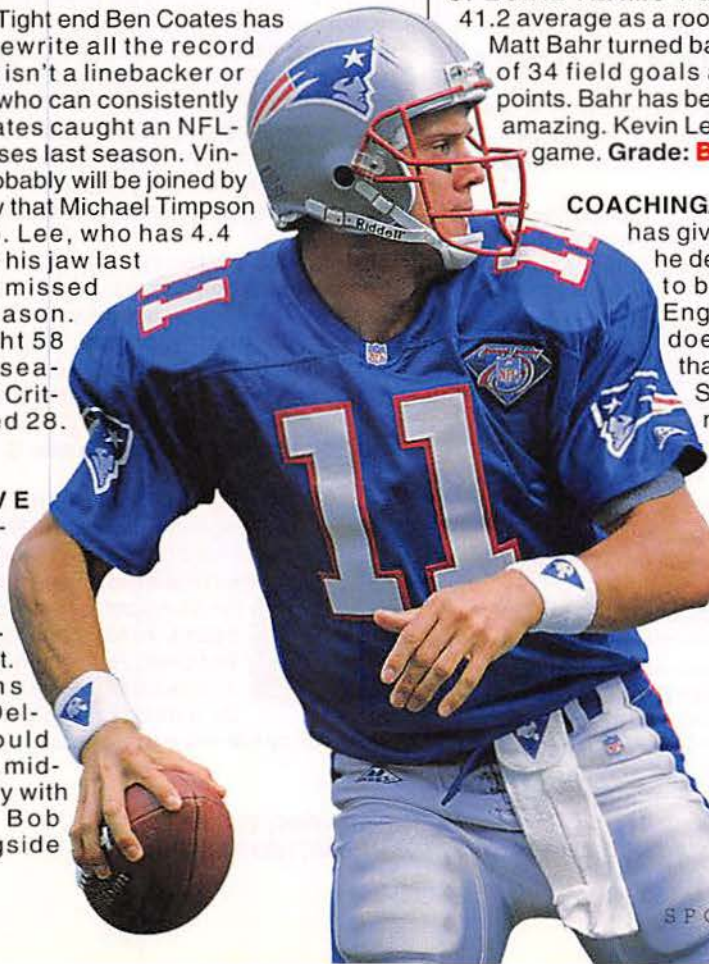
SECONDARY Right cornerback Maurice Hurst finally proved how good he was with seven interceptions last season. Hurst never was beaten deep, something that couldn't be said for Ricky Reynolds. Parcells was so concerned, he drafted Ty Law and Jimmy Hitchcock for depth. One of them should be a factor. To replace strong safety Harlon Barnett, Terry Ray should fill the bill. Myron Guyton anticipates well at free safety and is a heavy hitter. **Grade: A**

SPECIAL TEAMS Pat O'Neill responded with a 41.2 average as a rookie in '94, while placekicker Matt Bahr turned back the clock, converting 27 of 34 field goals and a perfect 36 on extra points. Bahr has been active since 1979, simply amazing. Kevin Lee should spice up the return game. **Grade: B**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Bob Kraft has given Parcells all the freedom he desired and hasn't forced him to be friendlier with the New England press corps. Parcells doesn't figure to coach more than two more seasons, so the Super Bowl drive is very meaningful for this two-time winner. **Grade: A**

SPORT RATING: A
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 11-5

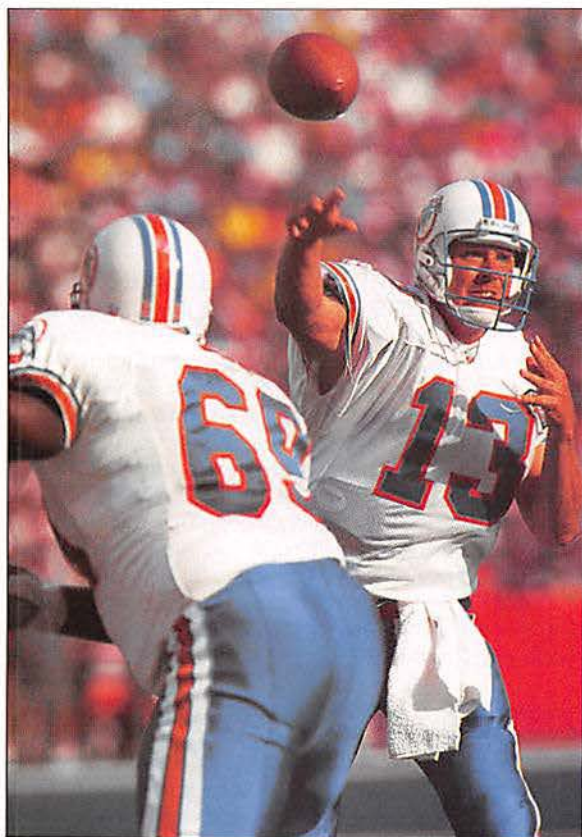
Seemingly born with a flair for the dramatic, Bledsoe, a superstar in the making, has the Pats thinking Super Bowl.



AFC
EAST

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

1



Throwing caution to the wind, Marino tossed 30 TD passes, bouncing back from a major injury.

1995 OVERVIEW On paper, the Dolphins appear to be improved, although they're thin at receiver and Don Shula (338 career victories) is counting on an injury-plagued backfield to return intact. Whether they can repeat as Eastern champions will be gauged early when the Dolphins travel to New England Sept. 10. They swept the Patriots last season, something that won't happen this year.

QUARTERBACK Dan Marino never looked back last season, playing in pain most of the year after having bone spurs removed from his ankle and Achilles tendon surgery. At times, Marino looked 23, not 33. He had the year's top two games (473 and 431 yards) and finished with 4,453 yards, giving him 45,173 in his career (1,830 behind Fran Tarkenton). Marino can throw another 30 touchdown passes, but will it be enough? Bernie Kosar will now have Dan McGwire looking over his shoulder, but neither can carry the load if Marino goes down. **Grade: A**

RUNNING BACK Terry Kirby and Keith Byars and their repaired knees are supposed to be ready for training camp. Byars, who had total reconstruction, might be out until mid-August. Bernie Parmalee picked up the slack last season, but without Byars, 32, as a safety valve, Marino didn't have a short-yardage option. Kirby used to explode through holes. The question remains: Will these two maintain their quickness? Irving Spikes may prove valuable again this season. **Grade: B**

RECEIVERS Irving Fryar had two consecutive specta-

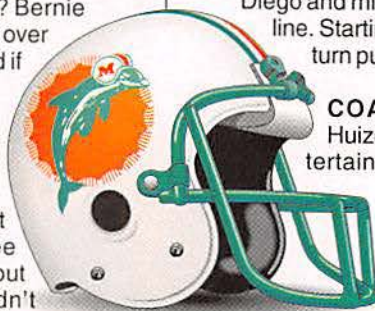
lar seasons. Fryar can still run by defenders and usually wins any jump balls. If he doesn't have 70 receptions, it's a bad season. O.J. McDuffie will replace the departed Mark Ingram. McDuffie is faster but not as sure-handed. From Arizona, Gary Clark and Randal "Thrill" Hill can still stretch a defense. Pittsburgh's Eric Green was the major offensive acquisition and could become a 65-catch tight end (63 in '93). Green, unlike Keith Jackson, also will block. **Grade: B**

OFFENSIVE LINE The Dolphins enter training camp with two right-side worries: 1) Can guard Bert Weidner return from knee surgery; and 2) Will tackle Ron Heller suddenly lose it at age 32? As a precaution, youngster Chris Gray has been penciled in for Weidner. Taking no chances, Miami's first two draft choices were offensive linemen. Tim Ruddy will replace Jeff Dellenbach, which won't be an easy task. The left side remains solidly intact with Richmond Webb and Keith Sims. If Weidner and Heller can play, Marino probably will enjoy another 17-sack season. **Grade: B+**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Tim Bowens brought some beef to the front four last season, but this group still can be steamrolled. Jeff Cross and Marco Coleman are ends who think rush first and lack the muscle to stuff the run. Chicago's Trace Armstrong, who will rotate with Coleman, fits the same mold. Bryan Cox might be a verbal headache to officials and fans, but he can flat-out play, again leading the team in tackles with 147. Shula wouldn't tolerate him otherwise. Dwight Hollier and Aubrey Beavers are both weak-side linebackers, which makes them vulnerable to power running games. **Grade: C**

SECONDARY Troy Vincent missed three games and played hurt in two others and still intercepted five passes last season. Vincent is Miami's best two-way performer; he enjoys forcing the run. Louis Oliver returns after a stint in Cincinnati. Gene Atkins and Michael Stewart think more like linebackers than safeties and lack the speed to recover when beaten deep. J.B. Brown continues to improve, and ex-Packer Terrell Buckley will be there in case he doesn't. Miami is holding a spot open for Deion Sanders, who would seriously upgrade this unit. **Grade: B-**

SPECIAL TEAMS For the third consecutive season, the Dolphins have changed punters. John Kidd averaged 43 yards after the Dolphins dumped Jim Arnold last season, but he can suffer from the shanks. Pete Stoyanovich missed the 48-yard field goal that would have beaten San Diego and missed four tries from inside the 40-yard line. Starting receiver McDuffie will attempt to return punts and kicks. **Grade: B**



COACHING/MANAGEMENT Wayne Huizenga, the chairman of Blockbuster Entertainment and owner of Florida's Marlins and Panthers, will be the first to break the multisport owner guidelines. His agents did have preliminary negotiations with Jimmy Johnson last season, but such a switch now seems to be a dead issue. Shula still is in charge and may continue to work as long as he wins. **Grade: B+**

SPORT RATING: B+
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 10-6

IF YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF YOUR CHILD AS THE MILITARY TYPE, THINK AGAIN.

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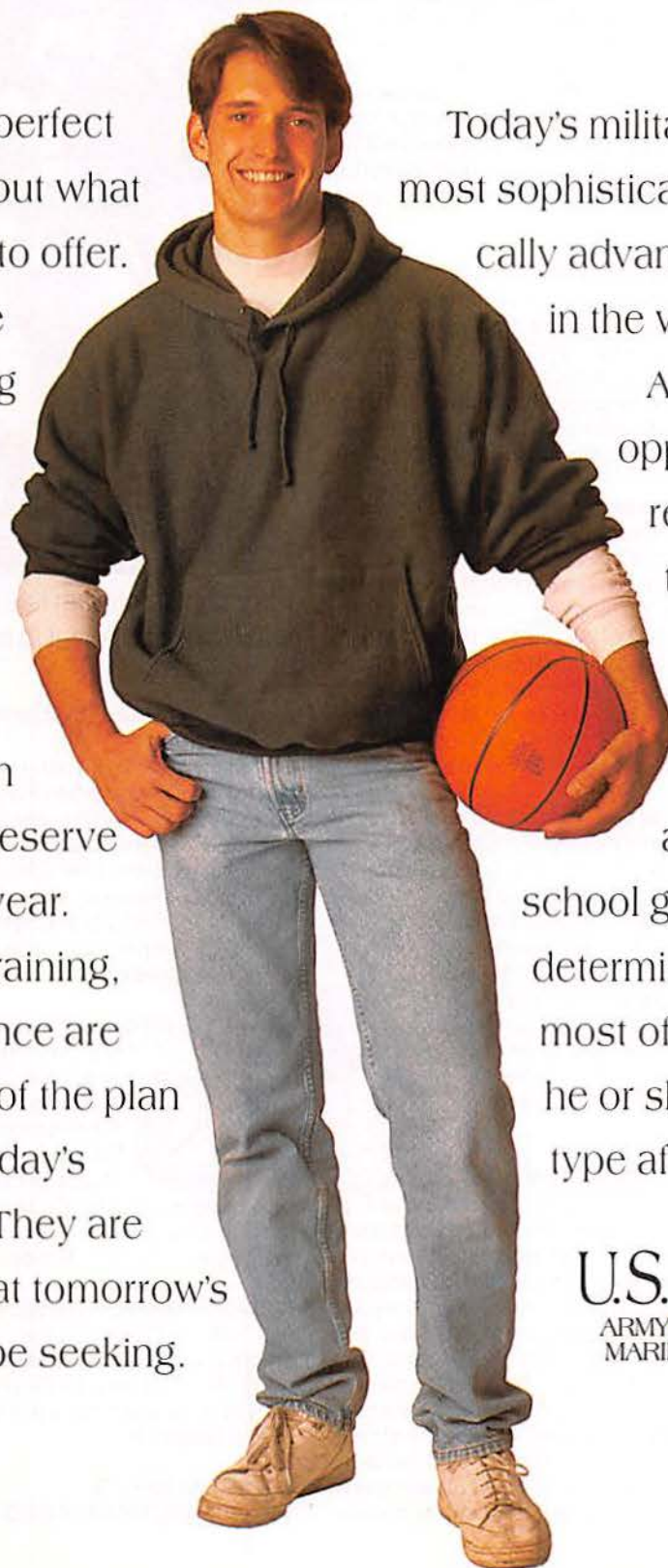
Although the military is getting smaller, the Armed Forces still need to recruit almost 400,000 young men and women for Active and Reserve positions each year.

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U.S. ARMED FORCES
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AFC EAST

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

3

1995 OVERVIEW Many believe the words of the Colts' Bill Tobin: "I certainly think we are contenders. We are in the thick of things." Indianapolis swept the Bills last season, the first time that's happened since 1980, and should have beaten Miami twice. Plus, they had a lot of bad luck on defense and played without a bona fide quarterback. Craig Erickson's arrival could mean the playoffs.

QUARTERBACK Erickson just missed a 3,000-yard season with Tampa Bay last year, and his style ideally suits this ball-control offense. Erickson completed 56 percent of his attempts, his average gain of 7.32 second only to Steve Young's in the NFC. Erickson handled adversity well and is strong-willed. He's never played with this much pro talent either. There is no question he'll win the job from Jim Harbaugh if the playing field is even, in spite of Harbaugh's improvement since leaving Chicago. **Grade: C**

RUNNING BACKS Marshall Faulk lived up to expectations by posting 1,804 total yards from scrimmage, the fourth-highest total ever by a rookie. Faulk's impact was staggering. In the four seasons prior to his arrival, the Colts averaged 76 rushing yards a game; last year, that average zoomed to 129. Rookie Zack Crockett is a clone of current fullback Roosevelt Potts. Potts had a long run of 52 yards from scrimmage, same as Faulk's. **Grade: A-**

RECEIVERS New offensive coordinator Lindy Infante likes the possession-passing game, but he'll have to change to implement the talents of Willie "Flipper" Anderson. The ex-Ram epitomizes the home run hitter: He may get the big score, but he drops his share of passes and never has been fond of the middle. Sean Dawkins and Floyd Turner are physical receivers, unlike Anderson. They combined for 11 touchdowns and 103 receptions last season. Dawkins has the skills to be a great one. Free agency cost them Kerry Cash, and replacement Ed West is a better blocker than receiver. **Grade: C**

OFFENSIVE LINE Free agency has paid off. Left tackle Will Wolford and center Kirk Lowdermilk started all 16 games and were big reasons why the Colts yielded only 28 sacks and brought the rushing game from last to fourth overall. Wolford still dominates the best pass rushers despite tender shoulders. Right guard Joe Staysniak has good feet and pulls well. Zefross Moss, who signed with Detroit, will be replaced by Cecil Gray. Randy Dixon, 30, remains an adequate player, and there is no one to push. **Grade: B-**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS For the third consecutive year, defensive tackle Steve Emtman suffered a season-ending injury. The Colts aren't counting on his return, which explains the first-round selection of Ellis Johnson. Johnson will start immediately. But if Emtman returns, the Colts are loaded. Tony McCoy and Tony Siragusa combined for 11 sacks last season, plus there's Bernard Whittington. Ex-Packer Tony Bennett led the Colts with nine sacks despite missing action with neck problems. Trev Alberts appears to be over his elbow problems, meaning he'll be the strong-side linebacker. Quentin Coryatt lines up on the weak side, a more natural position for his exceptional quickness. Jeff Herrod is the perfect man in the middle,



Harbaugh (pictured) has made strides, but now must take a backseat to newcomer Erickson.

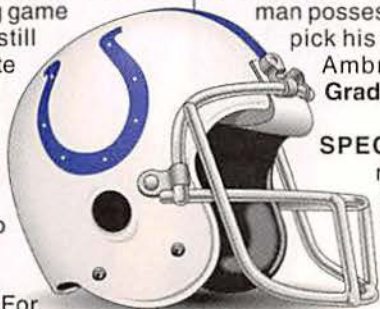
recording 54 double-digit tackle games. **Grade: B+**

SECONDARY This young, aggressive group found its niche last season when Ray Buchanan moved to left cornerback for seven games and promptly intercepted seven passes, returning three for touchdowns. With his contract resolved, free safety Jason Belser should be a man possessed, allowing David Tate to roam and pick his spots. Eugene Daniel edges Ashley Ambrose for the other cornerback spot. **Grade: B**

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Dean Biasucci may own the club's all-time scoring record with 783 points, but Mike Cofer figures to be the placekicker. Biasucci missed eight field goals last season. Bill Tobin signed an old Chicago draft choice in Chris Gardocki, who had the worst average in the NFC last season. Gardocki blamed the coaches. Ronald Humphrey has the speed to go all the way with any kick. **Grade: B-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Ted Marchibroda must deal with Bill Tobin's brother, Vince, as his defensive coordinator, and now Lindy Infante as his offensive coordinator. Neither was Ted's choice. So the Colts better start fast because there are two interim coaches in the wings. **Grade: B-**

SPORT RATING: B
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 9-7



1995 OVERVIEW Rich Stadium no longer is a sell-out haven, but great players win the big games, and Buffalo still has Jim Kelly, Bruce Smith, Andre Reed and Thurman Thomas. It's a good sign that there are only four other starters over 30 years old. After Kelly suffered a December knee injury, the Bills lost their last three games to finish 7-9, their first sub-.500 season since 1987. Owner Ralph Wilson could become impatient with coach Marv Levy, who was forced to hire Wade Phillips as defensive coordinator.

QUARTERBACK At 35, Kelly feels he played well last season, and the numbers prove it. He completed 73.4 percent of his attempts in the first quarter, had the fourth-best third-down conversion rate, and was the NFL's seventh-rated passer. Kelly averaged 222 yards passing per game, better than Troy Aikman. Kelly still has the power and touch to go deep, but can he really play 16 games after reconstructive knee surgery and nagging shoulder injuries? **Grade: B+**

RUNNING BACKS Statistically, Thomas is coming off his worst season since 1988, when he was a rookie. He had 1,442 total yards, more than 600 below his career best. Thomas will be aiming for his seventh straight 1,000-yard rushing season. Inconsistent line play and some lopsided scores reduced Thurman's role last season. The organization hopes Yonel Jourdain can assume a backup role and that Nate Turner presses fullback Carwell Gardner. **Grade: A**

RECEIVERS Two youngsters, tight end Lonnie Johnson and wide receiver Russell Copeland, must raise their playing level for Buffalo to be a playoff team. Johnson is faster than the departed Pete Metzelaars, but can he catch 50 passes? Copeland has only one career touchdown and 34 NFL receptions, putting the burden squarely on Reed. Reed had only three drops last season when he earned his seventh straight Pro Bowl vacation after catching 90 passes for 1,303 yards. Bucky Brooks must prove he can be a tough guy. **Grade: B-**

OFFENSIVE LINE Three spots are filled: center Kent Hull, left tackle John Fina and right tackle Glenn Parker. No. 1 pick Rueben Brown will be given every opportunity to start at guard, probably at right guard for Jerry Ostroski. Brown gives Buffalo some depth because Steve Hoyam is close to starting. Corey Louchiey still isn't ready to play tackle. Without question, there is a possibility of some

personnel juggling. Corbin Lacina and Ostroski will open at guard; Lacina has a future. This is Hull's final season, and he's surviving on his wits. **Grade: D**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS Buffalo allowed 356 points last season and never sustained a pass rush outside of Bruce Smith. And Smith, who forced five fumbles and posted 10 sacks, can expect more double- and triple-teams. Phillips decided to leave Cornelius Bennett on the open side, stacking him behind Smith. Darryl Talley, a powerful leader, is gone, meaning young Sam Rogers must deliver immediately. To help Smith, ex-Cowboy Jim Jeffcoat will play opposite him on passing downs. Ted Washington anchors the nose. Phil Hansen is better against the run than the pass. The weak-side pass rusher is high-priced Bryce Paup, the former Packer who simply can't muscle tight ends. **Grade: B+**

SECONDARY For the past two seasons, the secondary has gotten younger and more porous, and obviously is a huge concern. Strong safety Henry Jones is the lone veteran. Thomas Smith and Jeff Burris will start at the corners, with Matt Darby edging Kurt Schulz at free safety. Burris plays the ball well, but is a natural safety. Greg Evans and Filmel Johnson will compete for a nickel-back role. **Grade: C-**

SPECIAL TEAMS Everything begins with Steve Tasker, the consummate coverage man who seems possessed in the open field. Steve Christie opened last season with 17 straight field goals and finished 24 of 28, nailing both of his 50-yard attempts. Chris Mohr, a proven bad-weather punter, improved but only has seven touchbacks in two seasons. Jourdain and Burris both ranked among the top 10 returners. **Grade: C-**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT A couple of public-relations gaffes last season: GM John Butler barred the press from post-season interviews, and Thomas berated some young fans. Levy is a grand guy and solid coach, but he's a season shy of 70. **Grade: B**

SPORT RATING: C
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 7-9

The lone rusher, Bruce Smith anchors the Bills' defense and continues to excel despite double- and triple-teams.



1995 OVERVIEW There is a lot of sympathy in the New York area for owner Leon Hess, who said last January: "I'm 80 years old. I want results now. I've waited 25 years." Hess fired Pete Carroll because, like Bruce Coslet before him, his team faded in December (0-5). A lot of pieces are gone from last season, and no one, not even Rich Kotite, can prevent another disaster.

QUARTERBACK These days, Boomer Esiason, 34, talks better than he plays. Kotite won't hesitate, either, to jerk Boomer for Bubby Brister, the backup he brought along from Philadelphia who owns a career 54 percent completion average. Esiason was the eighth-rated AFC starter last season, passing for 2,782 yards and 17 touchdowns. But in critical situations, he faltered. For example, Esiason completed only 24 percent of his 87 third-and-long attempts. By comparison, rival Dan Marino clicked on 43 percent. Esiason can point fingers, but he's lost some zip. **Grade: C**

RUNNING BACKS Johnny Johnson's 90-yard run last season typified the Jets' frustration; he didn't score. Johnson rushed for a career-high 931 yards last season, but now ex-Cardinal Ron Moore could shove him aside. Moore, who will be 25 in November, has gained almost 1,800 yards in less than two full seasons. Kotite wants to play ex-49er Dexter Carter in all passing situations. **Grade: C**

RECEIVERS The offensive design will use a double tight-end formation because there isn't an experienced wide receiver on the roster unless Rob Carpenter is re-signed this summer. Pro Bowler Rob Moore, the club's offensive MVP, was traded to Arizona, and Penn State's Kyle Brady was drafted. At 6-6, 260 pounds, Brady is an imposing, sure-handed target. He could become as effective as Ben Coates. His partner, Johnny Mitchell, is more of a deep threat, averaging almost 13 yards a catch last season. Mitchell infuriates Esiason because he doesn't run precise routes and he'll drop some in the clutch. Among the holdover receivers, Stevie Anderson has more speed than Ryan Yarbrough or Orlando Parker. **Grade: D**

OFFENSIVE LINE Three starters were lost during free agency, and the only notable replacement is Northwestern guard Matt O'Dwyer, a talented rookie. But how can anyone build a line around a rookie? In fact, the two returnees, left guard Roger Duffy and right tackle Siupeli Malamala, are just average blockers, though tenacious and good on their feet. A lot will be asked of former reserves Matt Willig, Everett McIver and Terrence Wisdom. **Grade: C**

DEFENSIVE LINE/LINEBACKERS This bunch might win a Big Guy's 4x100 relay. Linebackers Marvin Jones, Mo Lewis, Bobby Houston and rookie defensive lineman Hugh Douglass represent a very quick group. Someone will break free and disrupt opposing offenses, helping the Jets improve on last season's dismal 29-sack total. Lewis and Jones combined for more than 200 tackles last season, and both run down backs. Jones has the potential to be super. Tony Casillas and Donald Evans should create enough pressure up front to free Douglass, who could play weak-side defensive end. Houston can dominate most tight ends. **Grade: B-**

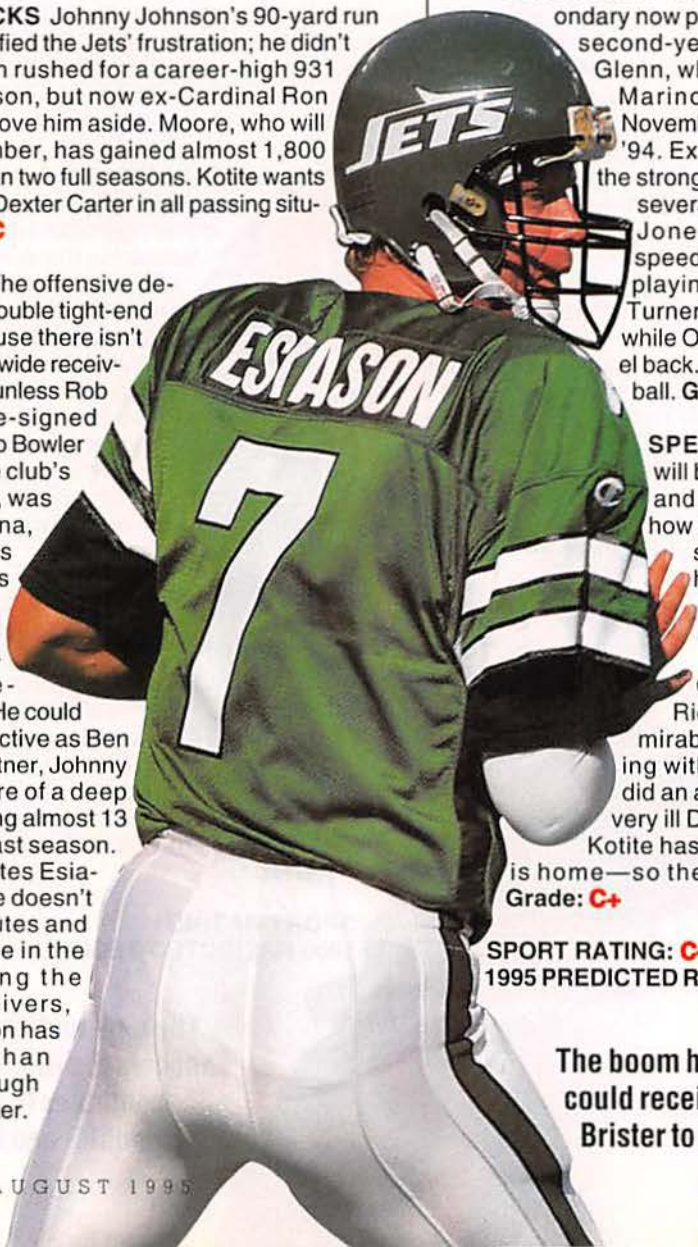
SECONDARY Three-fourths of the starting secondary now play for the Chiefs, leaving only second-year cornerback Aaron Glenn. Glenn, who was beaten when Miami's Marino faked spiking the ball last November, failed to intercept a pass in '94. Ex-Viking Todd Scott should be the strong safety, while the Jets beat out several teams for the Steelers' Gary Jones. Jones has great closing speed and simply didn't get enough playing time in Pittsburgh. Marcus Turner should man the other corner, while Otis Smith figures to be the nickel back. Pat Terrell rarely is around the ball. **Grade: C**

SPECIAL TEAMS Dexter Carter will be a huge plus on kick returns, and punter Brian Hansen learned how to deal with the Meadowlands' swirling winds. Nick Lowery has lost his leg power and is merely an adequate kicker. **Grade: C**

COACHING/MANAGEMENT Rich Kotite, at times, did an admirable job in Philadelphia, finishing with a 37-29 record. Dick Haley did an admirable job working with the very ill Dick Steinberg during the draft. Kotite has always wanted this job—this is home—so there are great expectations. **Grade: C+**

SPORT RATING: C-
1995 PREDICTED RECORD: 3-13

The boom has left Esiason, who could receive a challenge from Brister to lead the Jets' air attack.





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WEEK 1

SUNDAY, SEPT. 3

ARIZONA AT WASHINGTON	4:00
CAROLINA AT ATLANTA	1:00
CINCINNATI AT INDIANAPOLIS	12:00
CLEVELAND AT NEW ENGLAND	1:00
DETROIT AT PITTSBURGH	1:00
HOUSTON AT JACKSONVILLE	1:00
KANSAS CITY AT SEATTLE	1:00
MINNESOTA AT CHICAGO	3:00
NEW YORK JETS AT MIAMI	4:00
SAN DIEGO AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS	1:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT NEW ORLEANS	12:00
ST. LOUIS AT GREEN BAY	12:00
TAMPA BAY AT PHILADELPHIA	1:00
BUFFALO AT DENVER	6:00

MONDAY, SEPT. 4

DALLAS AT NEW YORK GIANTS	9:00
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WEEK 2

SUNDAY, SEPT. 10

ATLANTA AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
CAROLINA AT BUFFALO	1:00
DENVER AT DALLAS	3:00
DETROIT AT MINNESOTA	12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT NEW YORK JETS	4:00
JACKSONVILLE AT CINCINNATI	4:00
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT WASHINGTON	1:00
MIAMI AT NEW ENGLAND	1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT ST. LOUIS	12:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT KANSAS CITY	12:00
PITTSBURGH AT HOUSTON	12:00
SEATTLE AT SAN DIEGO	1:00
TAMPA BAY AT CLEVELAND	1:00
PHILADELPHIA AT ARIZONA	5:00

MONDAY, SEPT. 11

GREEN BAY AT CHICAGO	8:00
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WEEK 3

SUNDAY, SEPT. 17

ARIZONA AT DETROIT	1:00
ATLANTA AT NEW ORLEANS	12:00
CHICAGO AT TAMPA BAY	4:00
CINCINNATI AT SEATTLE	1:00
CLEVELAND AT HOUSTON	12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT BUFFALO	1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT NEW YORK JETS	4:00
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT KANSAS CITY	12:00
NEW ENGLAND AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT GREEN BAY	12:00
SAN DIEGO AT PHILADELPHIA	1:00
ST. LOUIS AT CAROLINA	1:00
WASHINGTON AT DENVER	2:00
DALLAS AT MINNESOTA	7:00

MONDAY, SEPT. 18

PITTSBURGH AT MIAMI	9:00
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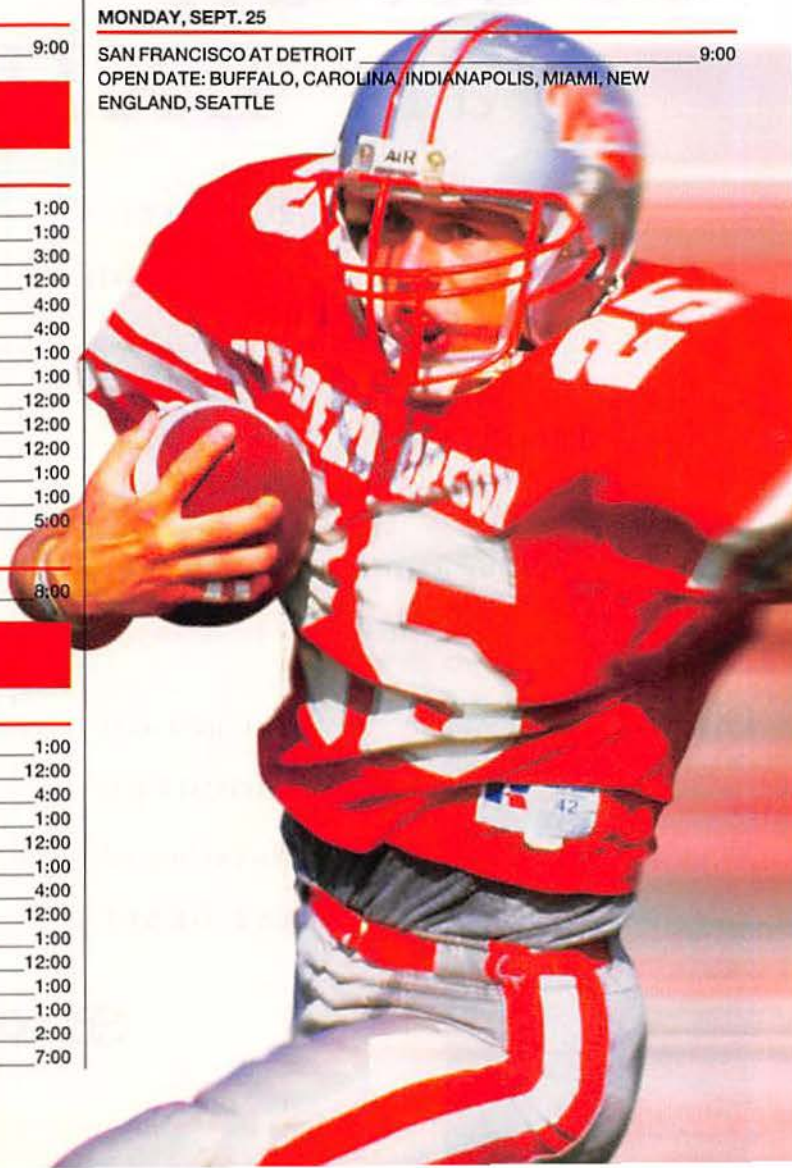
WEEK 4

SUNDAY, SEPT. 24

ARIZONA AT DALLAS	3:00
CHICAGO AT ST. LOUIS	12:00
DENVER AT SAN DIEGO	1:00
HOUSTON AT CINCINNATI	4:00
KANSAS CITY AT CLEVELAND	4:00
MINNESOTA AT PITTSBURGH	1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT NEW YORK GIANTS	1:00
NEW YORK JETS AT ATLANTA	4:00
PHILADELPHIA AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS	1:00
WASHINGTON AT TAMPA BAY	1:00
GREEN BAY AT JACKSONVILLE	8:00

MONDAY, SEPT. 25

SAN FRANCISCO AT DETROIT	9:00
OPEN DATE: BUFFALO, CAROLINA, INDIANAPOLIS, MIAMI, NEW ENGLAND, SEATTLE	



1995 NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE SCHEDULE

WEEK 5

SUNDAY, OCT. 1

DALLAS AT WASHINGTON	1:00
DENVER AT SEATTLE	1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT HOUSTON	3:00
KANSAS CITY AT ARIZONA	1:00
MIAMI AT CINCINNATI	1:00
NEW ENGLAND AT ATLANTA	1:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
PHILADELPHIA AT NEW ORLEANS	12:00
SAN DIEGO AT PITTSBURGH	4:00
ST. LOUIS AT INDIANAPOLIS	12:00
TAMPA BAY AT CAROLINA	1:00
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT NEW YORK JETS	8:00

MONDAY, OCT. 2

BUFFALO AT CLEVELAND	9:00
OPEN DATE: CHICAGO, DETROIT, GREEN BAY, MINNESOTA	

WEEK 6

SUNDAY, OCT. 8

ARIZONA AT NEW YORK GIANTS	4:00
CAROLINA AT CHICAGO	12:00
CINCINNATI AT TAMPA BAY	1:00
CLEVELAND AT DETROIT	4:00
GREEN BAY AT DALLAS	4:00
HOUSTON AT MINNESOTA	12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT MIAMI	4:00
NEW YORK JETS AT BUFFALO	1:00
PITTSBURGH AT JACKSONVILLE	1:00
SEATTLE AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS	1:00
WASHINGTON AT PHILADELPHIA	1:00
DENVER AT NEW ENGLAND	8:00

MONDAY, OCT. 9

SAN DIEGO AT KANSAS CITY	8:00
OPEN DATE: ATLANTA, NEW ORLEANS, ST. LOUIS, SAN FRANCISCO	

WEEK 7

THURSDAY, OCT. 12

ATLANTA AT ST. LOUIS	7:00
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SUNDAY, OCT. 15

CHICAGO AT JACKSONVILLE	1:00
DALLAS AT SAN DIEGO	1:00
DETROIT AT GREEN BAY	12:00
MIAMI AT NEW ORLEANS	3:00
MINNESOTA AT TAMPA BAY	1:00
NEW ENGLAND AT KANSAS CITY	12:00
NEW YORK JETS AT CAROLINA	4:00
PHILADELPHIA AT NEW YORK GIANTS	1:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT INDIANAPOLIS	12:00
SEATTLE AT BUFFALO	1:00
WASHINGTON AT ARIZONA	1:00

MONDAY, OCT. 16

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT DENVER	7:00
OPEN DATE: CINCINNATI, CLEVELAND, HOUSTON, PITTSBURGH	

WEEK 8

THURSDAY, OCT. 19

CINCINNATI AT PITTSBURGH	8:00
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SUNDAY, OCT. 22

ATLANTA AT TAMPA BAY	1:00
DETROIT AT WASHINGTON	1:00
HOUSTON AT CHICAGO	12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS	1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT CLEVELAND	1:00
KANSAS CITY AT DENVER	2:00
MIAMI AT NEW YORK JETS	1:00
MINNESOTA AT GREEN BAY	12:00
NEW ORLEANS AT CAROLINA	1:00
SAN DIEGO AT SEATTLE	1:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT ST. LOUIS	3:00

MONDAY, OCT. 23

BUFFALO AT NEW ENGLAND	9:00
OPEN DATE: ARIZONA, DALLAS, NEW YORK GIANTS, PHILADELPHIA	

WEEK 9

SUNDAY, OCT. 29

BUFFALO AT MIAMI	4:00
CAROLINA AT NEW ENGLAND	1:00
CLEVELAND AT CINCINNATI	1:00
DALLAS AT ATLANTA	1:00
GREEN BAY AT DETROIT	1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT PITTSBURGH	1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
NEW YORK JETS AT INDIANAPOLIS	1:00
SEATTLE AT ARIZONA	2:00
ST. LOUIS AT PHILADELPHIA	1:00
TAMPA BAY AT HOUSTON	3:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT WASHINGTON	8:00

MONDAY, OCT. 30

CHICAGO AT MINNESOTA	8:00
OPEN DATE: DENVER, KANSAS CITY, LOS ANGELES RAIDERS, SAN DIEGO	

WEEK 10

SUNDAY, NOV. 5

ARIZONA AT DENVER	2:00
BUFFALO AT INDIANAPOLIS	1:00



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CAROLINA AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
DETROIT AT ATLANTA	1:00
GREEN BAY AT MINNESOTA	12:00
HOUSTON AT CLEVELAND	1:00
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT CINCINNATI	4:00
NEW ENGLAND AT NEW YORK JETS	1:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT SEATTLE	1:00
PITTSBURGH AT CHICAGO	3:00
ST. LOUIS AT NEW ORLEANS	12:00
WASHINGTON AT KANSAS CITY	12:00
MIAMI AT SAN DIEGO	5:00

MONDAY, NOV. 6

PHILADELPHIA AT DALLAS	8:00
OPEN DATE: JACKSONVILLE, TAMPA BAY	

WEEK 11

SUNDAY, NOV. 12

ATLANTA AT BUFFALO	1:00
CAROLINA AT ST. LOUIS	12:00
CHICAGO AT GREEN BAY	12:00
CINCINNATI AT HOUSTON	12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT NEW ORLEANS	12:00
KANSAS CITY AT SAN DIEGO	1:00
LOS ANGELES AT NEW YORK GIANTS	1:00
MINNESOTA AT ARIZONA	2:00
NEW ENGLAND AT MIAMI	1:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT DALLAS	3:00
SEATTLE AT JACKSONVILLE	1:00
TAMPA BAY AT DETROIT	1:00
DENVER AT PHILADELPHIA	8:00

MONDAY, NOV. 13

CLEVELAND AT PITTSBURGH	9:00
OPEN DATE: NEW YORK JETS, WASHINGTON	

WEEK 12

SUNDAY, NOV. 19

ARIZONA AT CAROLINA	1:00
BUFFALO AT NEW YORK JETS	4:00
DALLAS AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS	1:00
DETROIT AT CHICAGO	12:00
GREEN BAY AT CLEVELAND	1:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT NEW ENGLAND	1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT TAMPA BAY	1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT MINNESOTA	3:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT PHILADELPHIA	1:00
PITTSBURGH AT CINCINNATI	1:00
SAN DIEGO AT DENVER	2:00
SEATTLE AT WASHINGTON	1:00
ST. LOUIS AT ATLANTA	1:00
HOUSTON AT KANSAS CITY	7:00

MONDAY, NOV. 20

SAN FRANCISCO AT MIAMI	9:00
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WEEK 13

THURSDAY, NOV. 23

KANSAS CITY AT DALLAS	3:00
MINNESOTA AT DETROIT	12:30

SUNDAY, NOV. 26

ATLANTA AT ARIZONA	2:00
CHICAGO AT NEW YORK GIANTS	1:00
CINCINNATI AT JACKSONVILLE	1:00
DENVER AT HOUSTON	3:00
MIAMI AT INDIANAPOLIS	1:00
NEW ENGLAND AT BUFFALO	1:00
NEW YORK JETS AT SEATTLE	1:00
PHILADELPHIA AT WASHINGTON	1:00
PITTSBURGH AT CLEVELAND	4:00
ST. LOUIS AT SAN FRANCISCO	1:00
TAMPA BAY AT GREEN BAY	12:00
CAROLINA AT NEW ORLEANS	7:00

MONDAY, NOV. 27

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT SAN DIEGO	6:00
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1995 NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE SCHEDULE

WEEK 14

THURSDAY, NOV. 30

NEW YORK GIANTS AT ARIZONA 6:00

SUNDAY, DEC. 3

ATLANTA AT MIAMI 1:00
CINCINNATI AT GREEN BAY 12:00
CLEVELAND AT SAN DIEGO 1:00
HOUSTON AT PITTSBURGH 1:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT CAROLINA 1:00
JACKSONVILLE AT DENVER 2:00
KANSAS CITY AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS 1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT NEW ENGLAND 1:00
PHILADELPHIA AT SEATTLE 1:00
ST. LOUIS AT NEW YORK JETS 1:00
TAMPA BAY AT MINNESOTA 12:00
WASHINGTON AT DALLAS 3:00
BUFFALO AT SAN FRANCISCO 5:00

MONDAY, DEC. 4

CHICAGO AT DETROIT 9:00

WEEK 15

SATURDAY, DEC. 9

ARIZONA AT SAN DIEGO 1:00
CLEVELAND AT MINNESOTA 11:30

SUNDAY, DEC. 10

BUFFALO AT ST. LOUIS 12:00
CHICAGO AT CINCINNATI 1:00
DALLAS AT PHILADELPHIA 1:00
DETROIT AT HOUSTON 12:00
INDIANAPOLIS AT JACKSONVILLE 1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT ATLANTA 1:00
NEW YORK JETS AT NEW ENGLAND 1:00
PITTSBURGH AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS 1:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT CAROLINA 1:00
SEATTLE AT DENVER 2:00
WASHINGTON AT NEW YORK GIANTS 4:00
GREEN BAY AT TAMPA BAY 8:00

MONDAY, DEC. 11

KANSAS CITY AT MIAMI 9:00

WEEK 16

SATURDAY, DEC. 16

GREEN BAY AT NEW ORLEANS 3:00
NEW ENGLAND AT PITTSBURGH 12:30

SUNDAY, DEC. 17

ARIZONA AT PHILADELPHIA 1:00
ATLANTA AT CAROLINA 1:00
CINCINNATI AT CLEVELAND 1:00
DENVER AT KANSAS CITY 3:00
JACKSONVILLE AT DETROIT 1:00
MIAMI AT BUFFALO 1:00
NEW YORK GIANTS AT DALLAS 3:00

NEW YORK JETS AT HOUSTON 12:00
SAN DIEGO AT INDIANAPOLIS 4:00
TAMPA BAY AT CHICAGO 12:00
WASHINGTON AT ST. LOUIS 12:00
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS AT SEATTLE 5:00

MONDAY, DEC. 18

MINNESOTA AT SAN FRANCISCO 6:00

WEEK 17

SATURDAY, DEC. 23

DETROIT AT TAMPA BAY 4:00
SAN DIEGO AT NEW YORK GIANTS 12:30
NEW ENGLAND AT INDIANAPOLIS 8:00

SUNDAY, DEC. 24

CAROLINA AT WASHINGTON 4:00
CLEVELAND AT JACKSONVILLE 1:00
DENVER AT LOS ANGELES RAIDERS 1:00
HOUSTON AT BUFFALO 1:00
MIAMI AT ST. LOUIS 3:00
MINNESOTA AT CINCINNATI 1:00
NEW ORLEANS AT NEW YORK JETS 1:00
PHILADELPHIA AT CHICAGO 12:00
PITTSBURGH AT GREEN BAY 12:00
SAN FRANCISCO AT ATLANTA 1:00
SEATTLE AT KANSAS CITY 12:00

MONDAY, DEC. 25

DALLAS AT ARIZONA 7:00

POSTSEASON

SATURDAY, DEC. 30

AFC AND NFC WILD CARD PLAYOFFS

SUNDAY, DEC. 31

AFC AND NFC WILD CARD PLAYOFFS

SATURDAY, JAN. 6

AFC AND NFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

SUNDAY, JAN. 7

AFC AND NFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

SUNDAY, JAN. 14

AFC AND NFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

SUPER BOWL XXX

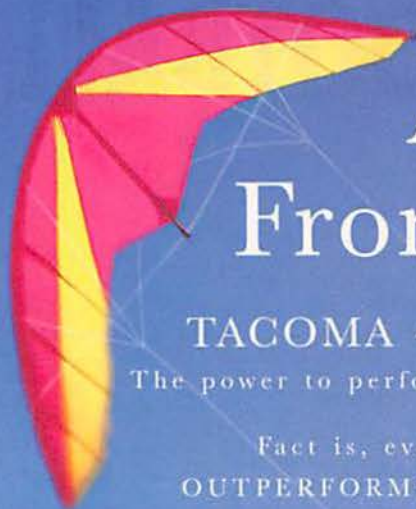
SUNDAY, JAN. 28

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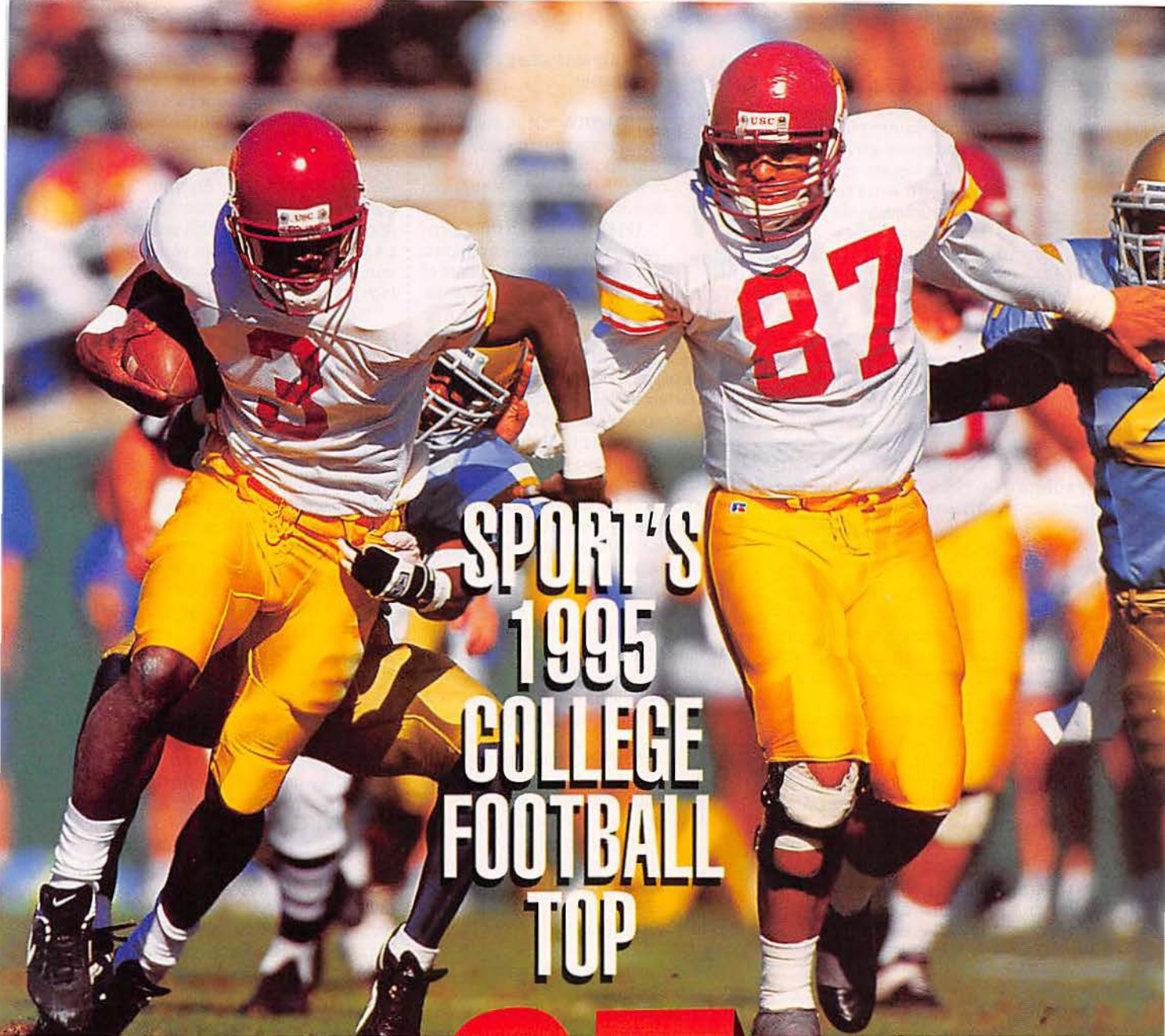
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SPORTS 1995 COLLEGE FOOTBALL TOP

USC APPEARS PRIMED FOR A **RETURN TO GLORY**, BUT NOT WITHOUT A **HARD PUSH** FROM FLORIDA STATE AND NEBRASKA
BY CRAIG ELLENPORT

It's been a year for sports nostalgia in Los Angeles. UCLA turned back the clock during the spring, evoking memories of

25

John Wooden and Lew Alcindor as the Bruins won the NCAA basketball tournament. Now it's USC's turn.

It's time for the Trojans to regain their place atop the college football world. John Robinson led USC to a national championship in 1978. Entering the third season of his second stint as head coach of the Trojans, he's got a team that can do it again.

MIKE POWELL/SPORT

1 USC Even before USC's 55-14 dismantling of Texas Tech in the Cotton Bowl, you could see the pieces coming together. There are some serious athletes on this Trojans squad, beginning with wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson, who ended the '94 season with eight straight 100-yard games, including the Cotton Bowl, in which he grabbed eight passes for 222 yards and three TDs.

"I think for the players, anything short of a national championship would be pretty disappointing," says Brad Otton, who still is neck-and-neck for the starting quarterback job with Kyle Wachholtz. Quarterback is one of the only unsettled spots for the Trojans, but Otton and Wachholtz both are highly touted prospects who have been in the program awhile. And whichever one does start, he'll spend plenty of time handing off to Shawn Walters (team-leading 976 yards in '94) and sophomore phenom Delon Washington. "We're not going to put undue pressure on ourselves, but we're not just setting our goals on the Rose Bowl," says Otton. "We want to win the national championship."

USC's talent gives them a chance to do that, and so does the schedule. The Trojans should be 6-0 before traveling to South Bend on Oct. 21 for what could be the most important USC-Notre Dame game in years.

Keep an eye on defensive end Israel Ifeanyi, a 6-5, 250-pound pass-rushing monster who came to America four years ago from Lagos, Nigeria. He's still growing as a football player, but just point him to the quarterback and he'll wreak havoc.

2 FLORIDA STATE If the AP voters agree with the Football Writers Association of America, Florida State will open the season ranked No. 1 for the fourth time in school history.

The Seminoles are coming off their NCAA-record eighth straight top-five finish. They've got archival Miami at home this year (in fact, if you include the season opener against Duke in Orlando, Florida State is "home" for six of its first seven games). They've got an experienced quarterback in senior Danny Kanell. And they've got one of the nation's biggest game-breakers in little Warrick Dunn, who rushed for 1,026 yards in '94 and caught 34 passes to boot. The 5-9, 178-pound junior should be a front-runner for the Heisman Trophy.

The defense loses impact players in Derrick Alexander, Derrick Brooks and three good defensive backs. The key defender to watch now is tackle Orpheus

Royce, who's got a great frame (6-4, 275) to go with his great name.

3 NEBRASKA "Of all the teams in America that reload," says ABC Sports college football guru Keith Jackson, "Nebraska does it the best."

Does that mean the Cornhuskers can repeat as national champs after so many years of falling short? Perhaps Tom Osborne deserves more than just one title to make up for all the near-misses.

As always, the talent is there. Osborne's biggest problem will be keeping two quarterbacks—Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer—satisfied. Frazier, who came back from a problem with blood clots in his right leg last season to be named MVP of the Orange Bowl, should be the starter. I-back Lawrence Phillips is the nation's leading returning rusher and a serious Heisman candidate. Center Aaron Graham is a potential All-American, and left tackle Chris Dishman is the next great Huskers lineman.

The Cornhuskers won't break a sweat until they play at Colorado in the eighth game of the season. After that, only a home game against Oklahoma poses any threat to another undefeated regular season.

4 AUBURN The Tigers have an easy schedule this season, and you know what? Terry Bowden deserves it. Bowden took over a floundering program in 1993 and steered it through two years of probation with a glimmering 20-1-1 record. Now Auburn is eligible to win the SEC title and go to a bowl game. It will do both.

The schedule practically hands Auburn nine wins, and the only two challenges—Florida and Alabama—both are at home. The defense, except for linebacker, will rely on some inexperienced players, but the offense should make up for that.

Tailback Stephen Davis could be ready to follow in Bo Jackson's footsteps and win the Heisman. "His size, speed and ability as a package may be the best I have seen as a coach," says Bowden. Davis rushed for 1,263 yards and 13 touchdowns in '94.

Left tackle Willie Anderson (6-6, 306) will pave the way for Davis and help protect quarterback Patrick Nix. Although Nix is a returning starter, some of the coaches are even more excited about backup Dameyune Craig.

5 PENN STATE Without quarterback Kerry Collins, running back Ki-Jana Carter and tight end Kyle Brady, the Nittany Lions may not average 48 points and 520 yards per game, as they did last season, but they'll score enough to get

back to the Rose Bowl—and maybe play USC for the national championship.

Holdovers from the potent '94 offense include four starting offensive linemen and perhaps the best pair of receivers in the nation—Freddie Scott and Biletnikoff Award winner Bobby Engram. The two combined for 99 receptions, 2,002 yards and 16 TDs a year ago. This season, they'll be catching passes from Wally Richardson, a junior whom the coaches are very high on.

"I think Wally can be a really good quarterback," says offensive coordinator Fran Ganter. "He really has a classic release. He gets rid of the ball as fast as anybody we've had around here in a long time."

Don't worry about the running attack—Mike Archie and Stephen Pitts averaged more than five yards a pop last year. And don't worry about the defense—Penn State finished 70th in the nation in total defense last year and still went 12-0.

6 TEXAS A&M "If I had to pick a No. 1, I might pick Texas A&M," says ESPN analyst Mike Gottfried.

Texas A&M will finish no worse than 10-1 in the regular season, but few voters will respect the schedule (hey, it's not A&M's fault the lame-duck Southwest Conference is so lame). "[The voters] are going to have to respect [the Aggies]," says Gottfried, "because they've got a really good team."

The Aggies—with southpaw Corey Pulfli at quarterback, Heisman Trophy candidate Leeland McElroy taking handoffs and returning kicks, and a top-five defense that features All-America candidates Brandon Mitchell and Ray Mickens—will indeed challenge for the national championship. But will they muster enough respect in the polls to avoid getting shut out of the title picture come New Year's day?

7 NOTRE DAME Notre Dame finished the '94 season with its tail between its legs, licking the wounds inflicted from a 41-24 Fiesta Bowl loss to Colorado. The Fighting Irish finished with their worst record (6-5-1) since 1986.

Lou Holtz kept telling us his team wasn't that good. Guess he was right. But the Irish, who averaged 10 wins a season from 1987 to '93, will bounce back. Ron Powlus has had a year to mature at quarterback, and he'll have Derrick Mayes, one of the best receivers in the country, as a target. Randy Kinder leads a loaded backfield, and the offensive line can only get better after being ravaged by injury in '94.

The defense, which allowed as many points last year as did Oregon State (21.7



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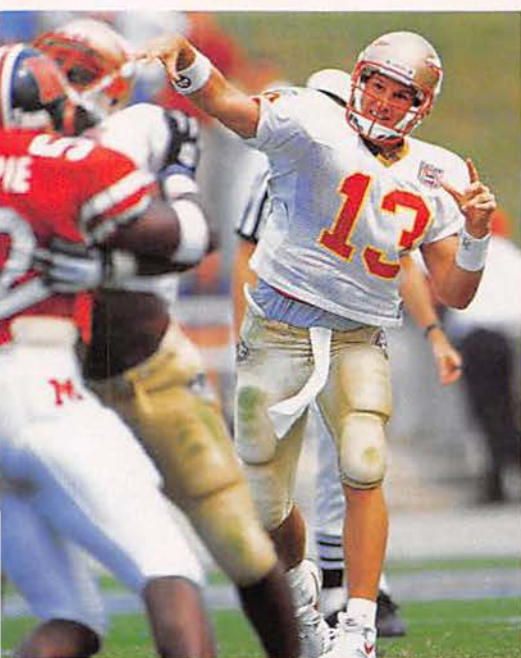
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BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN

Tommie Frazier (15) and the Cornhuskers will make a bid to repeat, but Danny Kanell-led FSU could stand in the way.

average, tied for 36th in the nation), will be young. The key for the Irish is senior defensive end Renaldo Wynn, who has the potential to be a disruptive force.

"We have a chance to be a good football team," says Holtz, "better than last year." From Lou, that's a rave.

8 COLORADO "There has been a mass exodus of fantastic talent here," says new Colorado head coach Rick Neuheisel. That's an understatement. Consider the losses: a Heisman Trophy winner

(2,000-yard rusher Rashaan Salaam), the school's all-time passing leader (Kordell Stewart), its all-time leading receiver (Michael Westbrook), the Thorpe Award winner (cornerback Chris Hudson), a Butkus Award finalist (linebacker Ted Johnson) and the coach who built the program into a national power in the first place (Bill McCartney).

McCartney's legacy will be that the Buffaloes have the ability to withstand those losses and still be a top-10 team. His top-notch recruiting will see to that, as will starting quarterback Koy Detmer, who some think is even better than his Heisman-winning brother, Ty.

9 FLORIDA Don't look now, Steve Spurrier is making another quarterback change.

Terry Dean must still be wondering how he went from Heisman

Trophy front-runner to second string so quickly. "Steve can cause trouble with all that waffling around," says Keith Jackson, who was in the broadcasting booth last year to call Florida's third straight appearance in the SEC title game. The Gators will make it four in a row this season and contend for the national championship. You've just got to wonder what Spurrier will do with his quarterbacks.

Junior Danny Wuerffel, who threw 18 TD passes last year vs. nine interceptions, takes over for Dean. If Spurrier waffles with Wuerffel, expect to see Eric Kresser take some snaps. Sophomore tailbacks Fred Taylor and Elijah Williams are stars. Sophomore receivers Reidel Anthony and Ike Hilliard are even bigger stars.

Watch for opponents to run the ball hard at the Gators defense, which must replace first-round draft picks Kevin Carter and Ellis Johnson along the front line.

SPORT'S 1995 COLLEGE FOOTBALL ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE

Pos.	Player	Year	Team
QB	Scott Milanovich	Sr.	Maryland
RB	Lawrence Phillips	Jr.	Nebraska
RB	Stephen Davis	Sr.	Auburn
WR	Bobby Engram	Sr.	Penn State
WR	Keyshawn Johnson	Sr.	USC
TE	Marco Battaglia	Sr.	Rutgers
OT	Jonathan Ogden	Sr.	UCLA
OG	Jeff Hartings	Sr.	Penn State
C	Aaron Graham	Sr.	Nebraska
OG	Jeff Smith	Sr.	Tennessee
OT	Willie Anderson	Jr.	Auburn
PK	Michael Proctor	Sr.	Alabama
KR	Leeland McElroy	Jr.	Texas A&M

DEFENSE

DE	Cedric Jones	Sr.	Oklahoma
DT	Marcus Jones	Sr.	North Carolina
DT	Kerry Hicks	Sr.	Colorado
DE	Tedy Bruschi	Sr.	Arizona
OLB	Simeon Rice	Sr.	Illinois
ILB	Ray Lewis	Jr.	Miami
OLB	Donnie Edwards	Sr.	UCLA
CB	Aaron Beasley	Sr.	West Virginia
CB	Ray Mickens	Sr.	Texas A&M
S	Greg Myers	Sr.	Colorado State
S	Lawyer Milloy	Jr.	Washington
P	John Stonehouse	Sr.	USC
PR	Eddie Kennison	Jr.	LSU

HEISMAN WATCH

Lawrence Phillips was overshadowed in the Big Eight last year by 2,000-yard rusher Rashaan Salaam, who ran away with the Heisman Trophy. Phillips was also overshadowed on his own team by Nebraska's unsettled quarterback situation. No one will overshadow Phillips in 1995.

While Tommie Frazier was sidelined with a blood clot in his right leg and Brook Berringer was feeling his way into the lineup, Phillips was a machine. If it's possible to rush for 1,722 yards and 16 touchdowns quietly, that's what Phillips did for the national champs last season.

Phillips, a 6-0, 215-pound junior, needs 1,086 yards to pass Calvin Jones for second on the Cornhuskers' all-time rushing list. He'll do that before the end of October. And like Mike Rozier, who is No. 1 on Nebraska's all-time rushing list, Phillips will bring home the Heisman.

Also in the hunt:

1. Ron Powlus, QB, Notre Dame
2. Stephen Davis, RB, Auburn
3. Warrick Dunn, RB, Florida St.

10 OKLAHOMA Howard Schnellenberger sure picked a great time to take the Oklahoma job. Nine starters are back on offense, 10 are back on defense, and aside from the Texas game, the Sooners' toughest nonconference competition comes from San Diego State. Oklahoma may be ready to challenge Nebraska for the Big Eight crown for the first time since 1987.

"They've got plenty of talent," says Jackson. "Old Tom Osborne is scared to death having Howard Schnellenberger in the conference."

Osborne should be just as scared of 6-4, 288-pound defensive end Cedric Jones, who set a Sooners record last year with 14 sacks. Jones leads a defense that held Nebraska to a season-low 13 points in 1994.

11 MIAMI The Hurricanes haven't won fewer than nine games in a season since Jimmy Johnson's first year as coach (1984). So if new head coach Butch Davis so much as stubs his toe, it will be considered a letdown.

Davis has kept a potentially ugly quarterback controversy to a minimum (Ryan Collins should be the starter, but not because of threats made by rapper Luther Campbell), and he promises to retain Miami's swagger despite the threat of NCAA

sanctions. Miami's toughest games this season are on the road (UCLA, Virginia Tech, Florida State and Boston College). If the Hurricanes win two of those games—and they will—then they'll finish 9-2.

The defense, which led the nation in fewest yards and fewest points allowed, will again be dominant. Sophomore Kenard Lang is the next All-America defensive lineman at Miami. The Canes' new two-back offense, with Danyell Ferguson running inside and Al Shipman outside, could be devastating.

12 OHIO STATE Penn State wasn't the only Big Ten team to have three players taken in the first round of the '95 NFL draft. Ohio State and Michigan both can make the same claim. But unlike the Lions and Wolverines, the Buckeyes return their starting quarterback (Bobby Hoying) and starting tailback (Eddie George).

Ohio State will be strong in the trenches: On offense, Big Ten freshman of the year Orlando Pace (6-6, 320) steps in at left tackle; on defense, Matt Finkes (11 sacks, two blocked punts, two blocked field goals) is one of four returning starters on the line.

Ohio State could be a top-five team if not for its schedule: road games with Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan; home games with Notre Dame and Washington; and the Kickoff Classic against Boston College.

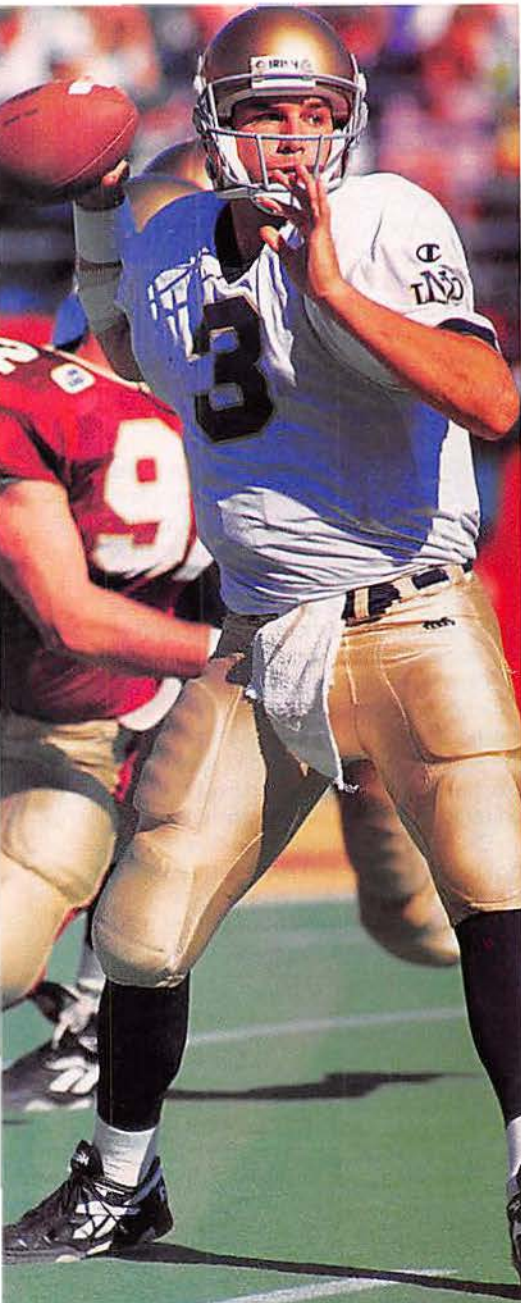
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BRUCE SCHWARTZMAN

and Aaron Hayden left off; and freshman Jeff Hall, who must replace John Becksvoort, the most reliable kicker in school history.

14 ALABAMA What's the one thing you know about Alabama? That's right, it'll have a mother of a defense. "Maybe better than last year," says ABC's Jackson. Considering only five starters return on defense, that tells you how much talent the Tide has in reserve.

The strength of the offense, believe it or not, is at receiver. Curtis Brown and Toderick Malone could start for Florida State. It's just a matter of whether Brian Burgdorf or Freddie Kitchens, the heirs not-so-apparent to Jay Barker's job at quarterback, can get them the football.

Not to worry. A running game paced by good-looking backs Dennis Riddle and Brian Steger and a defense that will stifle the opposition, will keep the Tide winning ugly all season. And if 'Bama beats Tennessee at home on Oct. 14, the regular-season finale at Auburn could be a titanic clash of unbeaten rivals.

15 MICHIGAN Replacing head coach Gary Moeller, who resigned in May following a disorderly conduct arrest, won't be nearly as important as replacing quarterback Todd Collins. Give Collins another year of eligibility and this might have been a championship season for the Wolverines. Michigan doesn't have a quarterback—untested Scott Dreisbach, Brian Griese (yeah, Bob's son) and Jason Carr will all get a shot—and that problem could neutralize the effectiveness of Amani Toomer and Mercury Hayes, who form one of the top receiving tandems in the nation. With Toomer and Hayes, awesome tailback Tshimanga Biakabutuka (783 yards in '94, 6.2 per carry) and Michigan's usual dominant offensive line, you've got one explosive offense.

The defense is strong up front—defensive tackle Trent Zenkewicz is even tougher than the pronunciation of his name—and in the secondary. The linebackers are young but promising. Assuming the quarterback plays well, Michigan could be 10-0 going into its final two games—at Penn State and home for Ohio State.

16 BYU With all the attention lavished on WAC upstarts Utah and Colorado State last season, few people were able to appreciate BYU's upset win over Notre Dame in South Bend or the Cougars' impressive 31-6 romp over Oklahoma in the Copper Bowl. Well, take notice, folks. BYU, which quietly finished 10-3 last sea-

son, is ready to return to its familiar place atop the WAC standings.

Junior college All-American Steve Sarkisian takes over at quarterback, and fullback Hema Heimuli is a tough-as-nails team leader. Heimuli, who racked up 1,008 all-purpose yards last season, required 70 stitches after his car rolled over six times in an accident last November. He didn't miss a single practice.

17 UCLA "Everybody tells me to watch out for UCLA," says Gottfried. So we're passing that advice along to you.

The Bruins managed to keep their three best underclassmen—offensive tackle Jonathan Ogden, receiver Kevin Jordan and linebacker Donnie Edwards—from bolting for the NFL. Their presence more than offsets the graduation of All-America receiver J.J. Stokes.

The defense, with nine starters back, revolves around Edwards, whom coach Terry Donahue calls the best in the country. Junior Abdul McCullough looks to carry on UCLA's tradition of outstanding safeties.

Ryan Fien takes over for Wayne Cook at quarterback, and he'll have a fine target in Jordan, who caught 73 passes for 1,228 yards in '94. Sharmon Shah quietly rushed for 1,227 yards last year and could be poised to earn national honors.

18 WEST VIRGINIA The Mountaineers won six of their last seven regular-season games a year ago and return what looks to be a potent offensive unit.

"I think our whole offense is maybe 10 times better than it was at the end of last year," says linebacker Canute Curtis. "I wouldn't want to play them."

Quarterback Chad Johnston came on strong down the stretch and could emerge as one of the better NFL prospects at his position. He'll be working with a loaded backfield, a solid offensive line and a superb receiving corps. The one to watch: speedster Rahsaan Vanterpool, who set a school record with 1,613 all-purpose yards in '94.

The defense, with seven returning starters, is paced by All-America cornerback Aaron Beasley, who led the nation last year with 10 interceptions.

19 ARIZONA "When you've got a nickname, you'd better be good," says Arizona head coach Dick Tomey. The problem for Tomey and his Wildcats is this: The Desert Swarm defense turned out to be a desert mirage. Through the first six games of 1994, Arizona allowed 71 points and posted a 5-1 record. Over the last six games, the Wildcats allowed 128 points and went 3-3.

Notre Dame's Ron Powlus didn't know what hit him last year, but better things are ahead.

13 TENNESSEE Peyton Manning began his career with as much hype as an incoming freshman could possibly have—and he delivered. Manning helped the Volunteers rebound from a sluggish start to win seven of their last eight games in '94.

Now a sophomore, Manning could be ready to take his team to the next level. Seven starters return on offense, 10 on defense. With the exception of road games against Florida and Alabama, the schedule is stacked in Tennessee's favor.

The key players for head coach Phil Fulmer: junior Jay Graham, who must take over where tailbacks James Stewart

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 Michael Irvin - \$45
 Jim Kelly - \$40
 Howie Long - \$35
 Ronnie Lott - \$35
 Dan Marino - \$45
 Rick Mirer - \$35
 Joe Montana - \$60
 Warren Moon - \$40
 Walter Payton - \$45
 Jerry Rice - \$45
 Barry Sanders - \$45
 Deion Sanders - \$40
 Junior Seau - \$35

Sterling Sharpe - \$45

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 Emmitt Smith - \$45
 Roger Staubach - \$50
 Lawrence Taylor - \$45
 Derrick Thomas - \$35
 Reggie White - \$35
 Rod Woodson - \$35
 Steve Young - \$45

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 Lenny Dykstra - \$35
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 Don Mattingly - \$50
 Mike Piazza - \$35
 Cal Ripken Jr. - \$50
 Nolan Ryan - \$55
 Ryne Sandberg - \$45
 Frank Thomas - \$45
 Ted Williams - \$95

Basketball

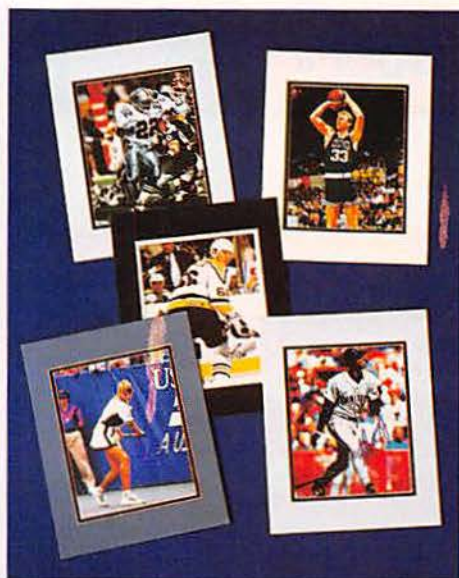
Charles Barkley - \$60
 Larry Bird - \$70
 Clyde Drexler - \$40
 Patrick Ewing - \$45
 Anfernee Hardaway - \$40
 Larry Johnson - \$45
 Magic Johnson - \$95
 Michael Jordan - \$150
 Shawn Kemp - \$40
 Christian Laettner - \$40
 Karl Malone - \$40
 Jamal Mashburn - \$35
 Reggie Miller - \$40
 Alonzo Mourning - \$40
 Chris Mullin - \$35
 Hakeem Olajuwon - \$40
 Shaquille O'Neal - \$95
 Scottie Pippen - \$40
 Mark Price - \$35
 David Robinson - \$40
 Glen Robinson - \$40
 Latrell Sprewell - \$35
 John Starks - \$35
 John Stockton - \$35
 Chris Webber - \$40

Hockey & Tennis

Pavel Bure - \$35
 Jimmy Connors - \$75
 Steffi Graf - \$40
 Wayne Gretzky - \$55
 Brett Hull - \$45
 Brian Leetch - \$35
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"I hope we'll be a little better," says Toney. With All-American Tedy Bruschi back to anchor the defensive line, Desert Swarm will do an adequate job. Quarterback Dan White is a seasoned veteran, and Richard Dice is one of the most underrated receivers in America.

20 BOSTON COLLEGE Did someone forget to tell us that BC moved to the Big Ten? The Eagles play Ohio State, Michigan and Michigan State all before the end of September, and they're at Notre Dame a month later.

Second-year coach Dan Henning has enough talent here to keep BC competitive. He would've been better off had Big East sack leader Mike Mamula stayed one more year, but the pro-style offense should be effective. Justice Smith will become BC's fourth 1,000-yard rusher in the last four years, and quarterback Mark Hartsell has a strong receiving corps.

21 UTAH "MAFU" sounds like the name of one of Utah's Samoan linemen. Actually, it's the acronym coach Ron McBride came up with for his team philosophy: Mental toughness, Aggressiveness, Fanatical effort and Unity.

The Utes must replace most of the

players who helped them post a school-record 10-2 season in 1994, but the most important ingredient is back: McBride. In five seasons at Utah, McBride has established himself as one of the nation's best coaches. Colorado State's Sonny Lubick is no slouch either, but Utah gets the nod here as the WAC's second-best team based on McBride's credentials.

22 VIRGINIA As usual, it's a logjam for second place in the ACC behind Florida State. Virginia looks to squeeze through the cracks on the basis of solid QB Mike Groh and a strong defense. Groh has the fourth-highest passer rating among returning Division I quarterbacks. The Cavaliers led the nation in rushing defense and interceptions. Sophomore defensive back Ronde Barber is a budding star.

23 MISSISSIPPI STATE Jackie Sherrill might prefer to win with a power rushing attack, but this year he'll work to his team's strength: the passing game. Derrick Taite proved to be a dependable quarterback last season, and senior receiver Eric Moulds developed into one of the most dangerous deep threats in the nation (he also led the nation in kickoff returns). Inside linebacker Dwayne

Curry is an All-American.

If the Bulldogs can get a consistent rushing attack, they'll have little trouble going 7-4, maybe 8-3.

24 WASHINGTON The better Washington does this year, the more chances we get to hear broadcasters mention Ink Aleaga, one of the better linebackers in the country as well as one of the better names. Aleaga and free safety Lawyer Milloy lead an always-strong Huskies defense, and quarterback Damon Huard had a stellar spring. Also impressive in spring was tailback Leon Neal, a Napoleon Kaufman clone.

25 KANSAS STATE The Wildcats should be ashamed of their non-conference schedule this year (Temple, Cincinnati, Akron, Northern Illinois), but let's face it: Before Bill Snyder took over in Manhattan, there was no such thing as an easy game for K-State.

Texas A&M transfer Matt Miller replaces Chad May at quarterback, the nation's sixth-ranked defense returns eight starters, and the schedule is a layup. The Wildcats are 26-3-1 at home in the '90s, and they get to host both Colorado and Oklahoma this season. ★

sport quiz

WIN
THE PIN

PIN SHOWN LARGER THAN ACTUAL SIZE

How's your sports IQ? The famous SPORT Quiz has been separating the savvy fan from the weekend wimp for decades. See how you do with these 13 questions. Then check the answers below for your score, and rate yourself as follows: **12-13 correct: Sports genius** 9-11 correct: **Good fan** 6-8 correct: **Working too hard** 3-5 correct: **To the showers** 0-2 correct: **Try knitting**

ANSWER THE SPORT STUMPER AND WIN A SPORT PIN. No matter how you do on this month's quiz, we'll send you a SPORT pin pictured above if you send us the correct answer to the SPORT Stumper given below. Send only your name, address and age to SPORT Quiz, 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048. Limit one per person, and all entries must be postmarked by July 14, 1995.

- 1 Last season, this tight end (pictured) led the AFC in receptions. Name him.
- 2 Which NFL player scored the most touchdowns last year?
A. Marshall Faulk B. Jerry Rice
C. Emmitt Smith D. Sterling Sharpe
- 3 Three NFL teams finished the 1994 season above .500 despite yielding more points than they scored. Name them.



BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN

- 4 Name the MVP of Super Bowl XXVI.
A. Jets B. 49ers
C. Falcons D. Dolphins
- 5 St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Brian Jordan once played football for which NFL team?
A. Jets B. 49ers
C. Falcons D. Dolphins
- 6 In 1994, whom did Buddy Ryan replace to become the head coach of the Arizona Cardinals?
A. Gene Stallings B. Hank Huhmann
C. Joe Bugel D. Larry Wilson
- 7 Since 1970, two golfers have the distinction of winning consecutive British Open titles. Name them.
- 8 Which golfer won the 1995 Masters?
A. Ben Crenshaw B. Greg Norman
C. Curtis Strange D. Jack Nicklaus
- 9 Going into the 1995 season, which golfer was the PGA's all-time money leader?

- A. Jack Nicklaus B. Tom Kite
C. Nick Price D. Paul Azinger

- 10 Five years ago, the New York Mets traded Lenny Dykstra and Roger McDowell to the Philadelphia Phillies for two players. Name them.
- 11 Pitcher David Cone was drafted by which major-league team?
A. White Sox B. Mets
C. Blue Jays D. Royals
- 12 Match the Hall of Famer with his last major-league team.
A. Willie Mays B. Hank Aaron
C. Steve Carlton D. Joe Morgan
1. Brewers 2. Mets 3. A's 4. Twins
- 13 Name the youngest major-leaguer to win a batting title.
—William Ladson

STUMPER Name the first major-leaguer to have three consecutive 100-RBI seasons for three different teams.

JULY '95 STUMPER ANSWER Kareem Abdul-Jabbar ("Name the only player to win the NBA Finals MVP with two different teams.")



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THIS MONTH'S QUIZ ANSWERS
1. Ben Coates 2. C (22) 3. Chicago Bears, New York Giants and Los Angeles Raiders 4. Mark Rypan 5. C 6. C 7. Lee Trevino and Tom Watson 8. A 9. B 10. Juan Samuel and Tom Edens 11. D 12. A 2-B 1-C 4-D 13. A/Kaine



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How to Take The World's Greatest Sports Photos

Whether you're in the upper bleachers or kneeling on the 50-yard line, great football photographs can be achieved by focusing on a few essentials.

The first is field position. If you're not following the line of scrimmage, position yourself in the end zone. Composition is also critical. Cropping too tight in the viewfinder will limit your ability to follow the action. (Fortunately, that's not a concern with the seamless operation of the Samsung ECX-1 auto focus, 38-140mm zoom.) Always travel light, but make sure to have a fannypack to store accessories such as film, batteries, paper, pen and cleaning material.

Proper camera settings are important.

Most professionals choose to "freeze" the action and choose a minimum shutter speed setting of 1/500th of a second or greater. Pans can also yield exceptional pictures and are a viable alternative for any football game.

A continuous shooting mode such as the option on Samsung's ECX1 allows a sequence of picture-taking for as long as the shutter is depressed. This is helpful for photographing a scrambling quarterback or a running back breaking through the line.

Some of the better football shots come from the sidelines, moving with the line of scrimmage. Key on the quarterback and other star players, but don't neglect the action away from the ball, such as the charging defensive lineman who eats drop-back passers for lunch.

Always remember to maintain focus through the viewfinder before, during and after you finally trip the shutter. Anticipate the plays as if you were the coach, and don't be afraid to move to another position. Many times, the wide receivers will be your point of focus despite not being involved in any play. The ability to successfully follow focus won't happen overnight. Good eye-hand coordination is required and is had by all of today's top professionals.



FOCUSED ON YOU

Tips From The Experts:

- Try shooting from the end zone with a telephoto setting.
- Put yourself in the mind of the coach. What would you do on third-and-long? Focus on the "go-to" players.
- Just because the action stops doesn't mean the shooting should.
- Consider "snap shooting" with Samsung's ECX-1 fixed focus-snap setting. This mode will maintain a wide-open, 38mm position.
- The Samsung's ECX-1 offers a continuous shooting mode, making this a perfect choice for close-up plays and sideline activity.
- Carry a clean cloth to clean the equipment, and always have the equipment professionally inspected to ensure that it's operating in the most efficient manner.

Photography is fun and can be rewarding both personally and financially. Once you have the bug, sports photography will be something you won't want to give up, and Samsung's ECX-1 camera won't be something you'll want to put down.

Even the Pros Trust Samsung For a Winning Performance



"When I need to capture a spontaneous moment away from the studio, I usually leave my complex SLR cameras inside their cases and reach for one of Samsung's quality compacts."

"When I go to a game, for instance, there's just no time to swap lenses or take light readings. Samsung's Slim Zoom 1150 helps me capture these winning moments precisely as they happen. Plus, it scores with a level of professional quality that satisfies even my critical eye. With infrared auto focus from 0.55M to infinity, a 38 - 115mm power zoom and continuous shooting at shutter speeds of up to 1/400 of a second, I'm able to record any sequence in a play without missing the point."

"And when I go on vacation, I rely on Samsung's lightweight ECX1, designed by F.A. Porsche. With multi-beam or single-beam autofocus, I have up to 96 focus zones at my disposal. Whether I'm shooting portrait zooms or landscapes, the real image viewfinder with diopter adjustments achieves the ideal shot every time. The best part is, one lens does it all—from offering the longest telephoto range available in point and shoot cameras today, 38 - 140mm, to providing ultra-wide panoramic capability for dramatic group or landscape shooting. All with automatic exposure compensation."

"When I'm out having fun, there's just no time for complicated set-ups. I need cameras that will do it all for me—fast—and with results I'd be proud to show off. That's what I get with Samsung's Slim Zoom 1150 and ECX1 compact zooms. I wouldn't trust my favorite subjects [or fans] to anything less equipped."

**Catherine Doyle,
Sport Magazine**



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REDEFINING ANDRE AGASSI

By Dan Dieffenbach

To be the best at anything, you must be talented, strong and clutch. Andre Agassi, with an unsteady hold on the tennis world's No. 1 ranking, is finding out he has all three ingredients.

In step with this discovery, Agassi shed his hair and image. What's left is a condensed attitude and an effective strategy between the

lines, where his serve is a weapon and his forehand ground strokes should be outlawed.

He's spent 1995 finding his game and reinventing his personality with the help of his new coach, Brad Gilbert, trainer Gil Reyes, and girlfriend Brooke Shields.

Now it's tennis on his terms.

"Everyone sees this image of him, they think he's this megastar, this untouchable, but he's a great kid, polite, down-to-earth, first class all the way," says Gilbert. "Sure, he's competitive, and, yes, he remembers every point. But thankfully, he's really into his tennis right now."

Working out has never been a strong suit for the former pudgy, temperamental Agassi, but his string of 47 wins in 51 matches since last year's U.S. Open is proof that he's taking tennis seriously.

OFF-SEASON TRAINING

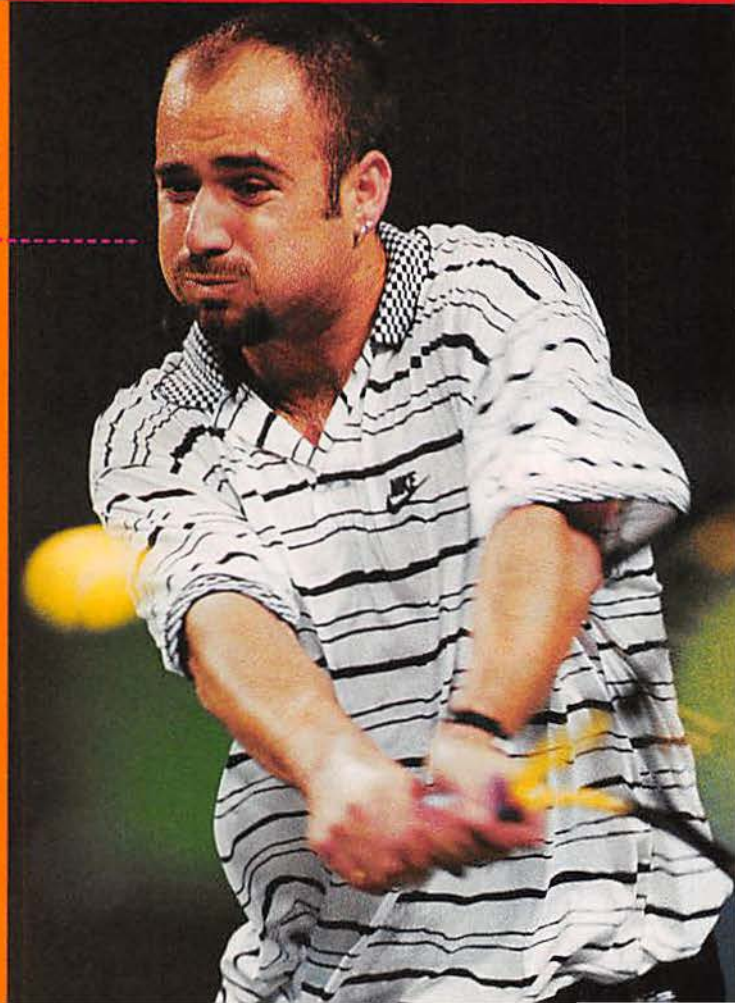
"There is no off-season in tennis," says Agassi. "You've got to fight fatigue all the way."

With direction from Reyes, the muscle has developed and the baby fat has taken a hike—as have most Agassi opponents.

"Early on, weights were never part of my career," Agassi explains. "I was 5-11 and weighed a weak 146 pounds when I first came on the tour, and I never had a strong training regimen."

Reyes helped Agassi, now 165 pounds, realize that "strength and speed are a major part of tennis, of any sport."

Prior to the majors, Agassi eases back on the training, yet in preparation for a tournament such as May's AT&T Challenge in Atlanta, he can be found at the gym. During recovery from wrist surgery in 1993—a turning point in his



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sport lifestyle



cracking the ball, and now he's ripping from both sides and learning to get to the net for the first time. He isn't thinking about the ranking, he's just playing with strategy."

Agassi concurs: "I rehearse the match in my mind, not being anal about it. It's amazing when that match is over and you realize how much energy you've spent."

GAME DAY

Agassi has captured Wimbledon, Australian and U.S. Open titles, yet each requires a different approach.

"Wimbledon is such a unique one, played just two weeks after the French," he says. "You must adapt to the change from slow clay to the fast grass."

Agassi and Gilbert arrive two weeks before Grand Slam events.

"[In those matches] you've got to be ready for war," Gilbert says. "You worry about winning the first set of the first match since everyone's hypin' him playing Pete [Sampras] in the finals, and you can't overlook anybody."

The entire tennis world wants to see Agassi and Sampras battle for a Grand Slam title and the No. 1 ranking, that there is no denying.

Says Gilbert: "Andre against Pete is one of the most intriguing things in sports. It's an awesome match." ★

career—the routine included six days working with weights.

"Gil travels with me to the major events like the French and Wimbledon, where diet and supplements are the keys to winning," says Agassi, who still resides in his hometown of Las Vegas.

And Agassi plays tennis against Gilbert, who has a 4-4 pro record against the 25-year-old. "He calls me BP [batting practice]; he really looks forward to beating on me," Gilbert says. "That gets him pumped up, beating on me."

DIET AND SLEEPING HABITS

"My diet is such that when I'm away from the game, I watch all my fat intake, I try to stay away from fried foods," says Agassi, winner of more than \$8 million in his career. "As I approach one week [before a big tournament], I pick up on my eating, since fat has the highest concentrate of energy."

What was once a rebellious lifestyle of flying his personal jet from city to city and howling at the moon is now much more relaxed.

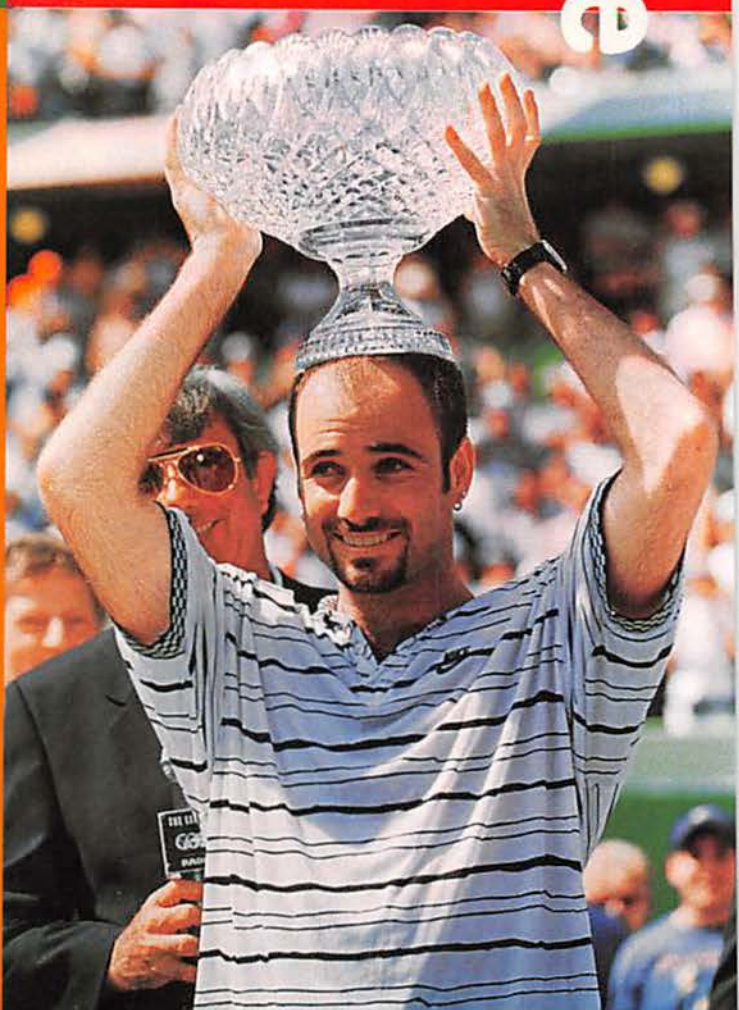
"I've always talked about being a night owl, which for me means sitting on my sofa or going four-wheeling with a buddy of mine," he says. "I've never been into the celebrity party circuit, and now I'm just more disciplined about my rest."

TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

"My philosophy is, listen to your body," Agassi says. "If you're hungry, eat. Feeling a little thirsty, load up on liquids. Your body is an incredible machine, and you've got to listen to it."

Agassi has been listening—to his body and to Gilbert. "When we started, he was ranked 32nd, now he's No. 1," Gilbert says. "When he was younger and smaller, he was

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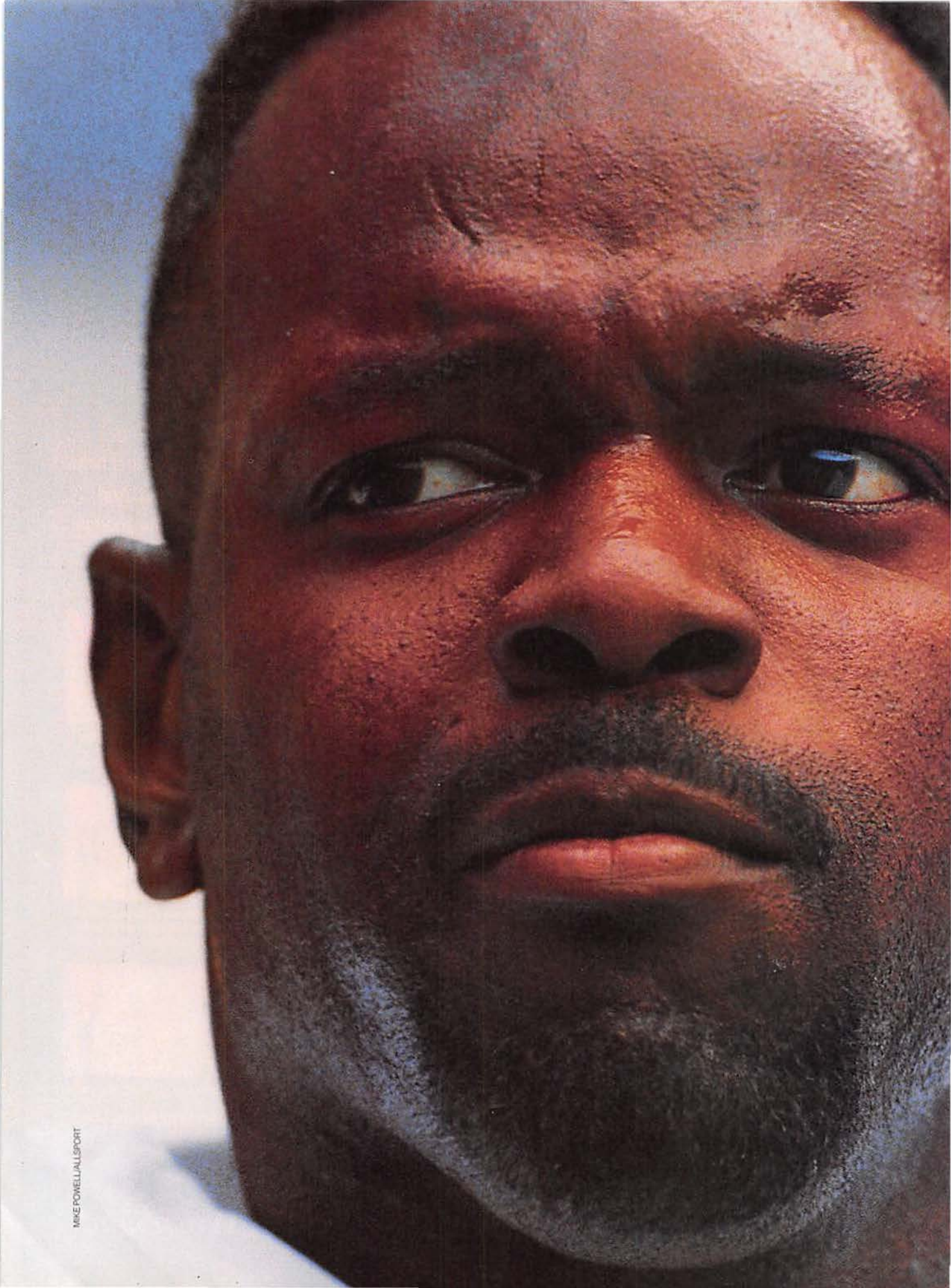


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Emmitt Smith is a young man imprisoned by purpose, frivolity rarely penetrating this 26-year-old's world.

There he sat this past spring in the back of a University of Florida classroom, making more money in a year than most of his classmates ever will in a lifetime, but nevertheless working toward the degree he promised Mom and Dad he'd earn.

There in Gainesville, Fla., he says he toiled as he's never toiled before, not only on his strength and conditioning for the 1995 NFL season, but rehabilitating last year's troubling hamstrings that hamstrung his—and the Dallas Cowboys'—quest for back-to-back-to-back Super Bowl titles.

So Smith will begin the new season knowing this much: He wants to regain the rushing title Detroit's Barry Sanders won in 1994. He wants to help the Cowboys regain their place in the Super Bowl that San Francisco took in 1994.

He wants to regain his health—the durability—that so many say the 1,600 carries in five seasons is beginning to steal.

But having been so busy for so many months following the Cowboys' 38-28 loss to San Francisco in the NFC championship game, the former three-time defending NFL rushing champ says he would be “looking for a little space” prior to the Cowboys' July 20 start to training camp. After all, a young man's got to have fun—sometime.

So he says this spring he's learned a valuable lesson—the necessity of saying no, a two-letter word he claims to have difficulty using. Fortunately, Emmitt Smith didn't say no to SPORT's request for an interview shortly before final exams.

SPORT: No matter the previous year's accomplishments, every season you seem to challenge yourself, set new, higher goals. Have you done that again?

**HAMSTRUNG IN HIS
ATTEMPT FOR A THIRD
SUPER BOWL RING,
THE UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA'S OWN STAR
VOWS TO TAKE THE
NFL BACK TO SCHOOL**

BY MICKEY SPAGNOLA

EMMITT SMITH





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In '94, Emmitt battled not only defenders but his ailing hamstrings. He still isn't 100 percent: "They feel good some days, and some days they don't."

SMITH: Every year. Every year is a new season. Probably my major goal this time will be staying healthy the whole season. 1994 was an injury-plagued season, one that I really wasn't used to having....I mean, dealing with the shoulder [surgery] wasn't a major deal. But that was the start of the injuries.

SPORT: Because of last year's injuries, which followed your shoulder surgery in the summer of '94, did your off-season workout program change?

SMITH: I've worked out harder than ever in the weight room. I've been cautious of my running, though. Very cautious about that.

SPORT: How are the hamstrings?

SMITH: You know, they're funny. They're feeling fine, and they're not feeling fine. They feel good some days, and some days they don't. Going through minicamps, it was kind of like testing the waters. I get on the track, went straight ahead. But now I'm doing some different kinds of stuff, darting in and out, changing directions, putting the hamstrings to the test. So they're kind of going through a stage where they have to readjust. And I believe once they get readjusted, everything will be better.

SPORT: Do you subscribe to the theory that all the carries (1,630) over the past five

years have taken a toll on your body?

SMITH: I hear that theory, but I don't want to believe it. You hear it so doggone much, but as a player you don't want to get it into your head. I try to keep a positive frame of mind. You're talking about people who don't even play football who are making suggestions like that. A lot of factors go into whether or not I'll be able to maintain what I've been doing. Perhaps they're right. Perhaps not. I don't know.... But I'm going to go as long as I can. That's all I can ask of myself, and that's all anyone else can ask of me.

SPORT: After five NFL seasons, does it become harder to motivate yourself for another one?

SMITH: No, I feel motivated. It's harder for me right now because I just spent five months in school. That's not off-season. That's work. And then as soon as I get done with school, I get back into training. So it's not like I really had a vacation. I'm doing double duty this year—sometimes triple duty when you talk about dealing with a 15-hour course load, dealing with the full travel schedule and the rehab.

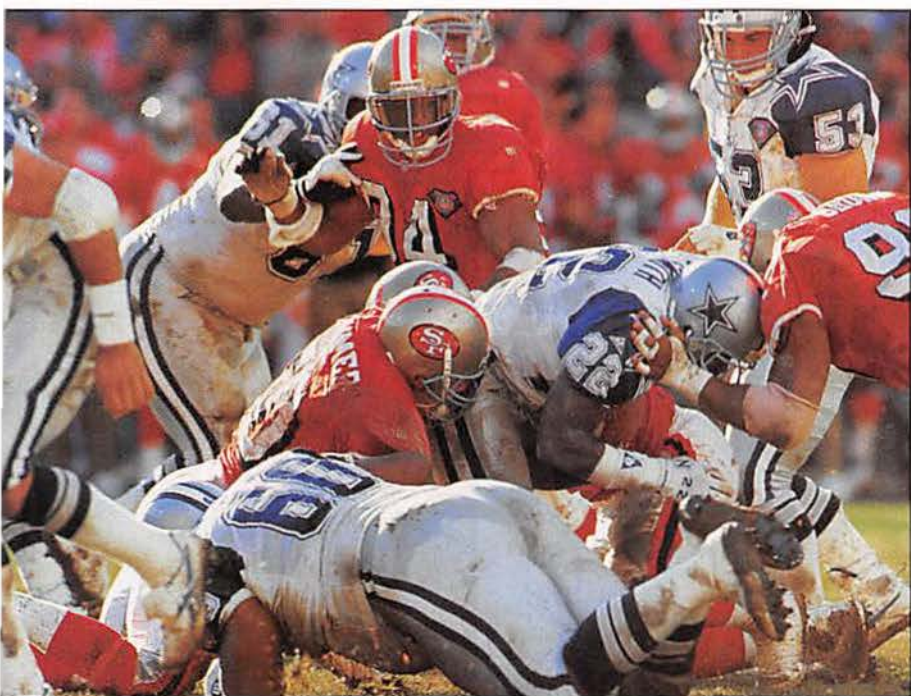
Then there are the fans. I've had more stuff thrown at me this year than in the past. And right now it's to the point where I'm looking for a little space where I can take some time off for myself. One thing they've taught me at the university in some of my [management] classes, you have to take time out for yourself....and you have to learn to say no. I'm one of those individuals who can hardly say no to anything. But when I do say no, and I don't know if it's the manner in which I say it or it's just me saying no, people's feelings are hurt.

SPORT: You've been successful in a short period of time, winning Super Bowls, NFC East titles, rushing titles, going to Pro Bowls—you've done so much. What else is there to accomplish?

SMITH: I've done a lot, and I'm proud of what I've done. But I'm not satisfied. The challenge for me right now is to recover from my injured hamstrings and the other injuries I've sustained. I've played football all my life, been durable throughout and fortunate to avoid major injuries....My aim is to come back from the injuries and play like I did with them, if not better. Funny thing, I still believe I was pretty effective even with the injuries—with the help of my teammates, of course. And I honestly believe if a healthy Emmitt Smith were at Candlestick last season [in the NFC championship game], it would've been a different ball game. But I can't dwell on that.

SPORT: What are your thoughts on the Cowboys using a high draft choice, a second-rounder, to select a creditable backup for yourself in Alabama's Sherman Williams?

SMITH: I always thought [Derrick] Lassic was a good running back, a back who could help move the team if I wasn't on the field. I felt that way about Lincoln [Coleman] too. But something gets in a coach's mind, or a coaching staff's mind, when a player, like Lassic, for example, [fumbles] early. Our coaches seemingly lost confidence in him. And he was always suspect; in the back of their minds there was that chance he'd fumble. Same thing with Lincoln. And same thing with the other backs who were here. I believe the coaches' confidence was low. When you don't have confidence in your backups, that puts ex-



ROB THOMAS JR. FOR SPORTS-ILLUSTRATED



tra pressure on the starters to stay in the game, to go out and perform, sometimes putting your own career at risk. In the past, it seemed everyone else's confidence was based on my being in the game.

SPORT: Do you feel that you're a quick starter when it comes to getting into the

flow of a game, or do you require a certain number of carries to gain momentum?

SMITH: I can reel off some numbers early if given the opportunities. But in some cases, you have to take what the defense gives you. I'm not Superman. I don't just go out there and blast it right off the bat. Some-

With a nose for the goal line, Smith rushed for a league-high 21 TDs in '94, but they weren't enough to prevent the 49ers from reigning on Dallas' parade.

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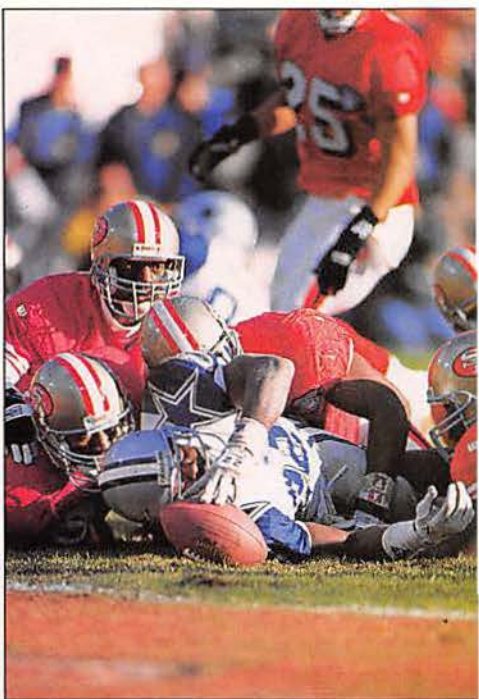
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Elusive Emmitt schooled defenders during the season and schooled at the University of Florida after it: "When I speak, the whole damn class listens."

times it takes time to get the feel of the game, get to feel the flow. Other times you can go out and make it happen early, but that doesn't guarantee you're going to make it happen late. Sometimes it slows down. You just got to feel your way through.

SPORT: Most of us never had the opportunity to carry a football in a game. What's going through your mind when you take a handoff?

SMITH: I'm concentrating on getting yards, gaining them the best way I know how. I'm looking for the open hole or a place where I can make something happen. If it's through the A-gap or B-gap or C-gap, I'm going to try and get there. It's not like I'm going to run a called play and stick with it. If the play is designed to go one way and I see something happen immediately to the left, I may not even go to the right. I may go left.

SPORT: What do you see that allows you to make those instant decisions?

SMITH: I see a lot. All I'm looking for is an open space and to see if I can get there. You got to know what you can do, what your limitations are. Sometimes things don't work the way you want them to. But I've been fortunate in my career to have a lot of stuff work my way.

SPORT: How soon during a play do you know you're headed for big yardage?

SMITH: Sometimes I can tell right away by how the hole is opening up, the play is developing, the players are flowing. Nine times out of 10 I'll start one way, but when I get there and I make up my mind, I've already seen how people are flowing and how many bodies are hanging around, then I have to make that second move. I try to get defenders to commit before I commit.

SPORT: At times, media headlines in Dallas have been misleading about the relationship you have with Cowboys running backs coach Joe Brodsky and how—

SMITH: [Interrupts] We get along. We have a great understanding of each other.... Some of the stuff he says I don't agree with, but he's a fun coach to be around, man. And I know what he's trying to get me to do. He's cool.

SPORT: What about Barry Switzer? Was that a difficult transition, going from Jimmy Johnson to Barry last year?

SMITH: I never thought about it. I just said to myself, you've got to give the guy a chance. I've been through coaching changes before, and no one is perfect. The bottom line is you've still got to go on the field and perform. Granted, some coaches might have a more powerful way of doing things, but there are different ways and different philosophies to get the same job done. I enjoy playing for Barry. I mean, I love Jimmy. I miss him. I miss his aura, just him being around, and sometimes you say: "You know, I wish Barry was like Jimmy." But Barry is Barry, and you have to deal with what Barry has

to offer. Barry is a great coach and great person, and I respect both traits.

SPORT: One of your best friends on the team these past five years, Tommie Agee—your roommate on the road—might not be back with the club this season. Are you worried he won't be re-signed?

SMITH: Yep. [Sighs] And that's going to be sad to see. I mean, it's sad to see a lot of players go. To see where we were, where we could have been, what we could have been doing—the things that we could have done together as a squad. I'm looking at what we have now, and it seems 90 percent of the team is rookies....

SPORT: The reality of free agency isn't pretty, but the combination of free agency and the salary cap makes it almost impossible to keep your team together, right?

SMITH: Yeah, the players didn't fight for no salary cap. I never fought for no salary cap. I fought for free agency. And I don't blame any player that goes to the highest bidder. Players have to do what they've got to do for themselves. I'd love to be [in Dallas] for the rest of my life, regardless of if we go 1-15 or not.

SPORT: What motivated you to return this past semester to the University of Florida?

SMITH: I wanted to get [my degree]. Plus, I'm building my home [in Dallas]. I'm finally making my commitment to Dallas. I've long wanted to make it, but I wanted the Cowboys to understand where I was coming from. I mean, I wanted to prove myself, prove to the Cowboys I'm worth [the money] that I asked for and then some. Now that I've proven myself, I'm willing to make the commitment because

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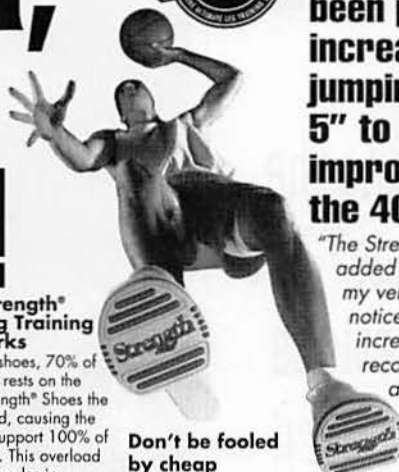
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SPORT: Didn't you make an agreement with your parents when you left school after three years not to build a house until you received your undergraduate degree from Florida?

SMITH: My original promise [to them] was to get my education before I got married or built a house. As it turns out, I'll have my house before I actually graduate, but I'll be mostly done with my course work. I'll just need to do my internship [in health and resort management].

SPORT: So what was it like being a 25-year-old senior at the University of Florida?

SMITH: It was cool. A lot of the students respected me by not hounding me for autographs and allowed me to be a student. Some might have been a little intimidated by me when I first got there, but after they saw what I was about, that I was kind of down to earth, they saw they could actually talk to me. One thing I did notice, though: When I speak, the whole damn class listens [laughs]. And it's pretty neat to know that when you speak, someone is paying attention to you.

SPORT: Did you have any initial inhibitions over participating in class, since whatever you said, right or wrong, good or bad, ev-

eryone in the class would know exactly what Emmitt Smith did or didn't know?

SMITH: Nah, I just moved right in. If something was brought up and I felt I had something to say about it, I said it.

SPORT: There haven't been many disappointments in your five-year career in Dallas until last season's NFC title-game loss to San Francisco. How tough was it to accept the loss, and how long did it take to get over not earning the shot for a record third consecutive Super Bowl title?

SMITH: It was tough. Because I don't know if any player wanted to beat the 49ers as badly as I did. I wanted to whup their behinds. Because I felt like, as Cowboys players, we were insulted. Seemed like people kept saying, they did this to the Cowboys. And under all the circumstances, under all the turmoil we went through...we went out to San Francisco and played our hearts out, played about as well as we possibly could. And granted, we turned the ball over three times and gave them 21 points in a hurry, but you saw a side of a team, man, you saw a side—we were playing out of pure mental toughness and pure inner energy. We were laying it on the line. I mean, I know I was, because I knew there was no way, shape or form I was ready to play that game, but I

went out there and gave it my all. And I know my teammates did the same thing. Michael Irvin's quad killing him the whole year. All those things. To go out there, to lose the game, you know, well, we can't win them all.

But I still don't, to this day, think last year's San Francisco team was better than a healthy Dallas Cowboys team. They were a very good team, don't get me wrong. But I still say the Cowboys, with the staff we had last year, and the players we had last year, we were a better team. We didn't show it. But I really do feel that way. And people will say, "But you didn't win." No, we didn't. But the best team doesn't always win.

SPORT: Was there a long period of funk after the loss?

SMITH: Man, I couldn't stand it, I hated watching [the 49ers] play. Because it seemed like everything they showed them doing [on TV], it was against the Cowboys. They threw it in our face. It was like getting slapped in the face watching the Super Bowl. I only watched the first two or three plays and I turned the damn television off. I knew we should've been there for the third time. ★

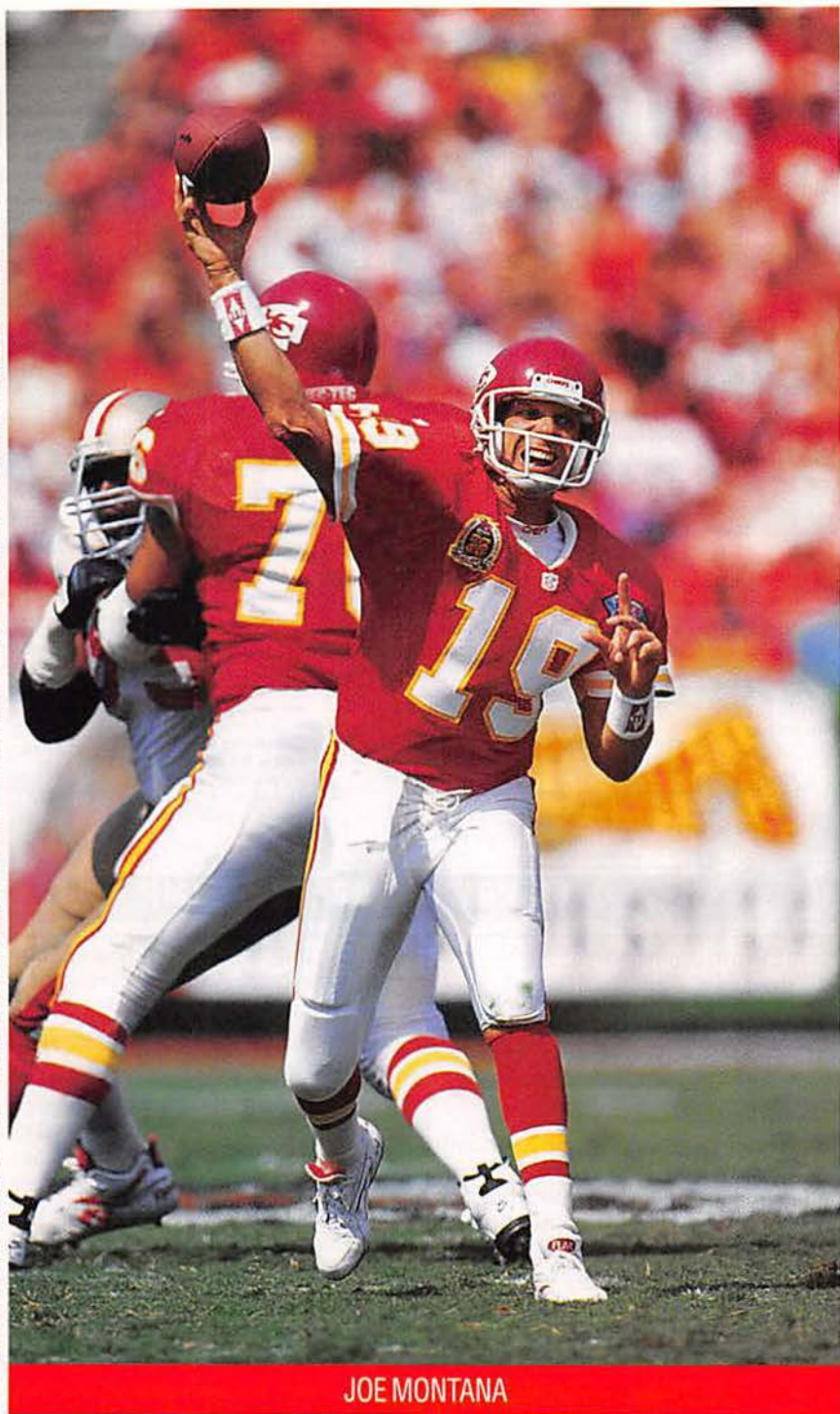
Mickey Spagnola covers the Cowboys for *The Insider* in Dallas.

Is Joe Montana the best of all time? Not by my calculations

By Rick Weinberg

He is regarded by many as the greatest quarterback in NFL history, yet such labels are tossed around in this day of media hype and sensationalism without regard to fact.

Yes, the retired **Joe Montana** was a sensational quarterback, certainly *one* of the best in NFL history. But *the* best? Tough to say. As **Dan Marino**, **John Elway**, **Warren Moon** or any accomplished quarterback will tell you, there are many factors involved in judging a QB's greatness.



JOE MONTANA

It's virtually impossible—and unfair—to compare great quarterbacks from different eras because the players and coaches surrounding the quarterbacks and the systems in which they operate determine, to a large extent, their levels of success.

"Those 'other' factors are seldom talked about when players are rated," says Eagles quarterback **Randall Cunningham**. "But you have to consider them. Quarterbacks have the most control in a

game, but in most cases, the talent of your teammates determines how successful you are, statistically and in wins and losses."

Montana was perfect for **Bill Walsh's** sophisticated system, but how many Super Bowl rings would Elway, Moon and Marino have today if they had played with the Niners and all that All-Pro talent?

Yes, some of Montana's numbers are staggering: no interceptions in four Super Bowls, a 66

percent Super Bowl completion ratio, a record five straight 400-yard passing games, a record 22 straight completions—twice—31 fourth-quarter comebacks, three Super Bowl MVPs, two regular-season MVPs. The list goes on.

Montana is fourth on the all-time list in passing yards (40,551) and touchdown passes (273) behind such stars as **Fran Tarkenton**, **Johnny Unitas** and **Dan Fouts**. Certainly, if Montana hadn't missed two seasons (1991 and '92) because of injury, he might have been the leader in every category.

But answer this: If Montana had played his 16 years with the Buccaneers, what would we be saying about him today? How many Super Bowls would he have won? Probably none. Would anyone be calling him the greatest quarterback in NFL history? Absolutely not.

If the Dolphins don't make it to Super Bowl XXX, it will have a devastating effect on quarterback **Dan Marino**, coach **Don Shula** and the entire organization.

The Dolphins are counting on this being their year. They had high hopes last season as well, but even had the Dolphins advanced to the Super Bowl, played in Miami, it's doubtful they could have knocked off **Steve Young** and the 49ers.

Last season was the Niners' year. Period. No one was going to prevent them from winning, not after they rebuilt their defense by acquiring **Deion Sanders**, **Ken Norton Jr.**, **Gary Plummer**, **Tim Harris**, **Rickey Jackson**, **Toi Cook**, **Richard Dent**, **Charles Mann** and **Deidrick Dodge**.

But this season could be different. The Niners have lost running back **Ricky Watters**, while the Dolphins have acquired tight end **Eric Green**, defensive lineman **Trace Armstrong** and cornerback **Terrell Buckley**.

"We expect to win it all," says Dolphins receiver **Irving Fryar**. "Like last year was San Francisco's year, we feel this is ours. If we don't win it, it'll be very hard to get over. With all the moves we've made, we're ready to do this year what the 49ers did last year. We won't settle for anything less than the Super Bowl."

Buckley says the Packers made a huge mistake by trading him to the Dolphins for a draft choice.

"I couldn't believe they gave up on me just like that, after just three seasons in the league, and especially after the season I had [last year]," he says. "I had a hell of a season. I picked off five passes, forced three fumbles, recovered two of them. I defended 18 passes. I got beat, what, one time all season? I don't know what their problem is. Well, it's their mistake. They'll realize it."

Can you believe that the Raiders, of all teams, will go to the no-huddle offense? The day after they announced the change, the *Los Angeles Times* ran this biting headline: "Raiders Go From Muddle to No Huddle."

The Raiders, of course, have had one of the most archaic and predictable offenses for years. But now, under new head coach **Mike White** and new quarterbacks coach **Jim Fassel**, they've done an about-face. The new staff plans to allow quarterback **Jeff Hostetler** to call his own plays. The staff also wants to increase

the role of speedy wideout **Rocket Ismail**, a weapon who's been essentially ignored in his two seasons in Los Angeles.

"I can't tell you how elated everyone on the team is about this change," Rocket says. "That's all we talk about. Everyone's juiced."

But before the Raiders get too far ahead of themselves, Hostetler must have confidence in receivers other than **Tim Brown**, who had 1,309 yards on 89 receptions last season. Ismail was a distant second with 513 yards on 34 catches. The Raiders must also stick with one running back, something they've been unable to do since **Bo Jackson** donned the silver and black. **Harvey Williams** was projected as the No. 1 back, but then the Raiders selected **Napoleon Kaufman** in the draft, so who knows what'll happen come September. Remember, these are the Raiders.

The versatile **Herschel Walker** nearly wound up with New York's other pro football team, the Jets. Instead, he's a Giant. New Jets head coach **Rich Kotite** had Walker with the Eagles and lobbied to acquire him again



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after Walker was released by Philly following the **Ricky Waters** signing. "Herschel Walker is one of the best and one of the toughest football players I've ever been around in all my years in professional football," Kotite says. "He's a sensational human being and player, a joy to be around. To me, he was the Eagles' Most Valuable Player the last two seasons."

If Walker had become a Jet, it would have meant moving **Johnny Johnson**, another of the league's more versatile backs. Johnson rushed for 931 yards and caught passes for another 749, placing him 10th in the AFC in total yards. Walker had 528 yards rushing, 500 receiving. Jets management isn't crazy about paying Johnson \$2 million. As it turned out, Walker was able to get a surprising three-year, \$6.9 million deal from the Giants after his release by the Eagles.

Mavericks point guard **Jason Kidd** wound up fifth in a midseason poll in which two assistant coaches and a general manager rated the talent from last year's NBA draft. But Kidd blew by his competition in the final two months of the season, thus altering the opinion of our panel.

When the season ended, two of the three panel members concluded that even though Kidd may not have been the best rookie, he certainly was the rookie who had the biggest impact on his team.

"I still think that if the draft was redone, the top three would stay the same," says one of the assistant coaches, referring to **Glenn Robinson**, **Grant Hill** and **Kidd**. "Even though Kidd was incredible down the stretch, I think Milwaukee and Detroit would've stayed with their picks."

How much of an impact did Kidd have on the Mavs? His presence helped Dallas to the sixth-best single-season improvement in history. **David Robinson** is No. 1 on that list of rookies who most drastically improved their teams, followed by **Larry Bird**, **Kareem**



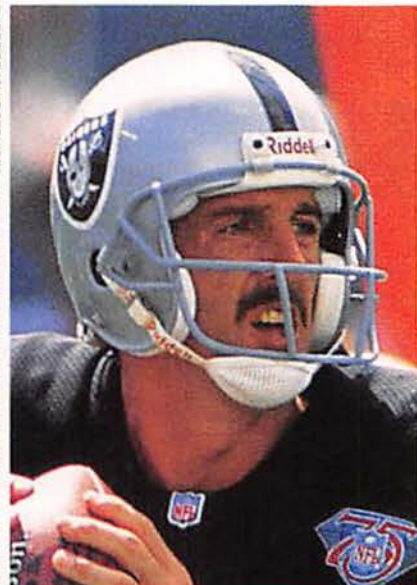
JOHN ELWAY



DAN MARINO



WARREN MOON



JEFF HOSTETLER

Abdul-Jabbar, **Mitch Richmond** and **Elvin Hayes**.

"Jason Kidd is unbelievable," says Spurs forward **Sean Elliott**. "He does so many things that can make a difference—passing, driving, rebounding. He doesn't play like a rookie. He has a keen, advanced knowledge of the game. I'm impressed."

We all are.

Major-league executives say Angels general manager **Bill Bavasi** made an outstanding trade in acquiring **Tony Phillips** for moody and mistake-prone **Chad Curtis**. "Actually, that was a deal that helped

both teams, but in the short run, there's no question the Angels came out a little better," says an AL GM.

The only plus for Curtis is that he's 10 years younger than Phillips. But Phillips is such a perfect fit for the Angels that Giants manager **Dusty Baker** says California now has a good chance to win its division. Of course, we're talking about the American League West, baseball's weakest division. A .500 record might seal the crown.

The Angels lacked punch—**Chili Davis** and **Tim Salmon** are their only legitimate power hitters—and Phillips, who hammered

19 homers in last year's strike-shortened season, can provide some. Says Tigers manager **Sparky Anderson**, "He's the second-best leadoff man in the American League [behind the Indians' **Kenny Lofton**]."

Phillips consistently ranks among the league leaders in walks and on-base percentage—key stats for a leadoff man. Curtis was unproductive as the Angels' leadoff man and uncomfortable at the top of the order.

The switch-hitting Phillips, who can play left field, third base and second base, gives the Angels another strong, veteran voice in the clubhouse, a guy who's been through pennant drives and the postseason.

Meanwhile, the Tigers have no chance of winning the AL East, so they wound up unloading a 36-year-old for a 26-year-old who happens to be from Michigan. Curtis is ultraintense, fiery and aggressive. But his abrasiveness and moodiness have an adverse effect in the clubhouse, and his aggressiveness often leads to mistakes in the field, on the bases and at the plate.

"Curtis is no more than a .260-.270 hitter without much power and run-production potential," says an AL scout. "His best attribute is that he steals bases."

The short-term effect is that the Angels may have earned a spot in the division-title hunt with this acquisition. But should the Angels find themselves out of the race, imagine all the contenders lining up to acquire Phillips' services in August. "I guarantee there'd be a number of clubs who'd want him to bolster their chances of winning a championship," Baker says.

Another upside for California is the financial aspect of the trade. Curtis is in the second year of a three-year deal that pays him \$1.9 million this season, \$2 million next. Phillips is in the final year of a three-year contract that pays him \$3.5 this season. Detroit agreed to pay \$1.5 million of Phillips' salary. So not only do the Angels get a better player for the same salary, they replace Curtis' \$2 million next year with **Garrett Anderson's** major-league minimum of \$109,000. By next season, Anderson, one of the Angels' most highly regarded prospects, will be ready to take over in the outfield on a regular basis. ★

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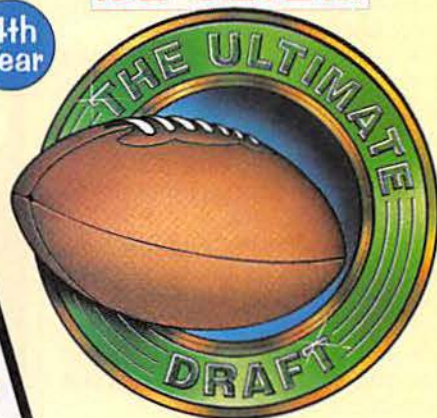
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Points Allowed
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3 - 6 ... 15 pts
7 - 13 ... 10 pts
14 - 20 ... 5 pts

IMPORTANT: Players earn points for any stats they are credited with - whether it be for passing, rushing, receiving or kicking - regardless of the position they play. Points are awarded on a game by game basis.



Make ONE selection from each group.

Player Points (PTS) are based on 1994 statistics using the Ultimate Draft scoring system. Due to publishing deadlines, team designations may not reflect recent changes.

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2 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Cunningham PHI 14 272		2 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Brown NYG 15 205		2 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Faulk IND 16 304		2 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Bennett GB 16 249		2 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Carter MIN 16 294	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Elway DEN 14 287		3 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Hostetler LA 16 281		3 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Foster PIT 11 148		3 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Bettis STL 16 191		3 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Coates NE 16 255	
4 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Everett NO 16 294		4 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Humphries SD 15 234		4 <input type="checkbox"/> N. Means SD 16 270		4 <input type="checkbox"/> G. Brown HOU 12 132		4 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Irvin DAL 16 239	
5 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Favre GB 16 387		5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Kelly BUF 14 270		5 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Sanders DET 16 309		5 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Hampton NYG 14 170		5 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Mathis ATL 16 315	
6 <input type="checkbox"/> J. George ATL 16 296		6 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Kreig ARZ 8 157		6 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Smith DAL 15 365		6 <input type="checkbox"/> L. Hoard CLE 16 233		6 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Moore DET 16 255	
7 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Marino MIA 16 370		7 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Mirer SEA 13 169		7 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Thomas BUF 15 248		7 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Johnson NYJ 16 195		7 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Reed BUF 16 278	
8 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Moon MIN 15 290		8 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Mitchell DET 9 127		8 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Warren SEA 16 296		8 <input type="checkbox"/> E. Rhett TB 16 179		8 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Rice SF 16 363	
9 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Young SF 16 444		9 <input type="checkbox"/> V. Testaverde CLE 14 215		9 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Watters PHI 16 292		9 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Williams LA 16 229		9 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Rison CLE 14 240	
REC (06)	TEAM GP PTS.	REC (07)	TEAM GP PTS.	K (08)	TEAM GP PTS.	DEFENSE (09)			
1 <input type="checkbox"/> F. Barnett PHI 16 221		1 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Anderson IND 15 172		1 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Andersen NO 16 172		1 <input type="checkbox"/> Arizona		★ No Hidden Charges!	
2 <input type="checkbox"/> B. Blades SEA 16 219		2 <input type="checkbox"/> V. Brisby NE 14 178		2 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Bohr NE 16 171		2 <input type="checkbox"/> Cleveland		★ Photocopies Welcome!	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> H. Ellard WSH 15 250		3 <input type="checkbox"/> W. Davis KC 13 165		3 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Carney SD 16 203		3 <input type="checkbox"/> Dallas		★ NEW - Team Defense	
4 <input type="checkbox"/> I. Fryar MIA 16 246		4 <input type="checkbox"/> Q. Early NO 15 196		4 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Christie BUF 16 158		4 <input type="checkbox"/> Green Bay		Group Included and	
5 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Haynes NO 16 210		5 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Harper TB 14 163		5 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Elam DEN 16 179		5 <input type="checkbox"/> Kansas City		More Points for	
6 <input type="checkbox"/> A. Miller DEN 15 203		6 <input type="checkbox"/> T. Martin SD 16 181		6 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Joeger LA 16 141		6 <input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota		Field Goals!	
7 <input type="checkbox"/> C. Pickens CIN 15 250		7 <input type="checkbox"/> R. Moore ARZ 16 219		7 <input type="checkbox"/> N. Johnson ATL 16 137		7 <input type="checkbox"/> Pittsburgh			
8 <input type="checkbox"/> J. Reed MIN 16 227		8 <input type="checkbox"/> D. Scott CIN 16 175		8 <input type="checkbox"/> F. Reveiz MIN 16 200		8 <input type="checkbox"/> San Diego			
9 <input type="checkbox"/> S. Sharpe DEN 14 216		9 <input type="checkbox"/> M. Timpson CHI 14 188		9 <input type="checkbox"/> P. Stoyanovich MIA 16 155		9 <input type="checkbox"/> San Francisco			

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JUST SAY NO TO

UGLY

RACE CARS

ENGINEERING'S
TRIUMPH OVER ART
By Rick Voegelin

Once there was a time when race cars were sleek and graceful, their shapely forms designed by eye rather than by computer. While beauty is indisputably in the mind of the beholder, anyone can see that the new generation of Grand Prix cars has, with few exceptions, exceeded the limits of simple homeliness and entered the realm of the truly ugly.

At the pinnacle of international motorsports, Formula One sets the world standard for unattractive race cars. With their noses high in the air, their front wings drooping and their wasp-waisted cockpits so narrow that only anorexic drivers need apply, these carbon-fiber creations have become auto racing's equivalent of Frankenstein's monster.

If the U.S. Congress set out to build a race car, it would probably look like the McLaren MP4/10. Liberally adorned with wings and fins, the shark-nosed McLaren resembles something dredged up from the seabed. The new McLaren's original cockpit was so cramped that the team's No. 1 driver, former F1 and IndyCar champion Nigel Mansell, couldn't fit in it. While McLaren's ace engineers went back to their drawing boards, Mansell sat out for the first two races of the '95 season—an expensive enforced vacation, given Mansell's multimillion-dollar retainer.

How did it come to this? Race teams certainly don't start out to build ugly cars; the paramount goal is to build a winning race car. In truth, the unsightly race cars of the 20th century are the byproducts of relentlessly efficient engineering and impossibly complex rules.

However, in the wake of several wrenching accidents last year, the high priests of auto racing decreed that too much aerodynamic downforce—the “glue” that sticks the race car to the track surface—was a bad thing. To reduce cornering speeds, the rulemakers literally and figuratively clipped the wings of the race teams. When downforce suddenly became a precious commodity, the de-

signers went back to their wind tunnels and work stations to cut their losses. What emerged was a new fleet of ugly-duckling Formula One machines.

If the engineers' tests had shown that hanging a pair of fuzzy dice on the rear-view mirrors increased cornering speed, you can be sure that every F1 car on the grid would soon be equipped with enough dice to stock a Las Vegas casino. Given free choice, constructors would undoubtedly prefer to build handsome race cars. But given the imperative to maximize performance within the very narrow bounds prescribed by the rulebook, beauty is inevitably the first casualty.

Perhaps the only way to redress this situation is to give fans a voice. But now that the relationship between production and Grand Prix cars has been forever severed, fans have no recourse to address the problem of ugly race cars other than turning off their TV sets.

Perhaps a return to the Roman way would suffice: a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down vote from the grandstands. Does this car deserve to race? An affirmative answer would send the car to the starting grid; a negative vote would see the car crushed on the spot.

This modest proposal could be extended to other forms of motorsports. The stock cars that run in NASCAR circles aren't inherently unattractive, but only the color blind could love the paint schemes dreamed up by some corporate art departments. In their attempts to stand out in the clutter, they have simply created high-speed eyesores.

Fortunately, there are still sanctuaries for race cars that don't offend the senses. Vintage racing provides a refuge where the classics can still be seen in action. And with stable and sensible rules, even contemporary racing series can produce visually appealing automobiles. Compare, for example, the slick machines found on America's homegrown IndyCar circuit with their mega-dollar counterparts in Formula One. The conclusion is clear: In motorsports, as in life, money is no substitute for good taste. ★

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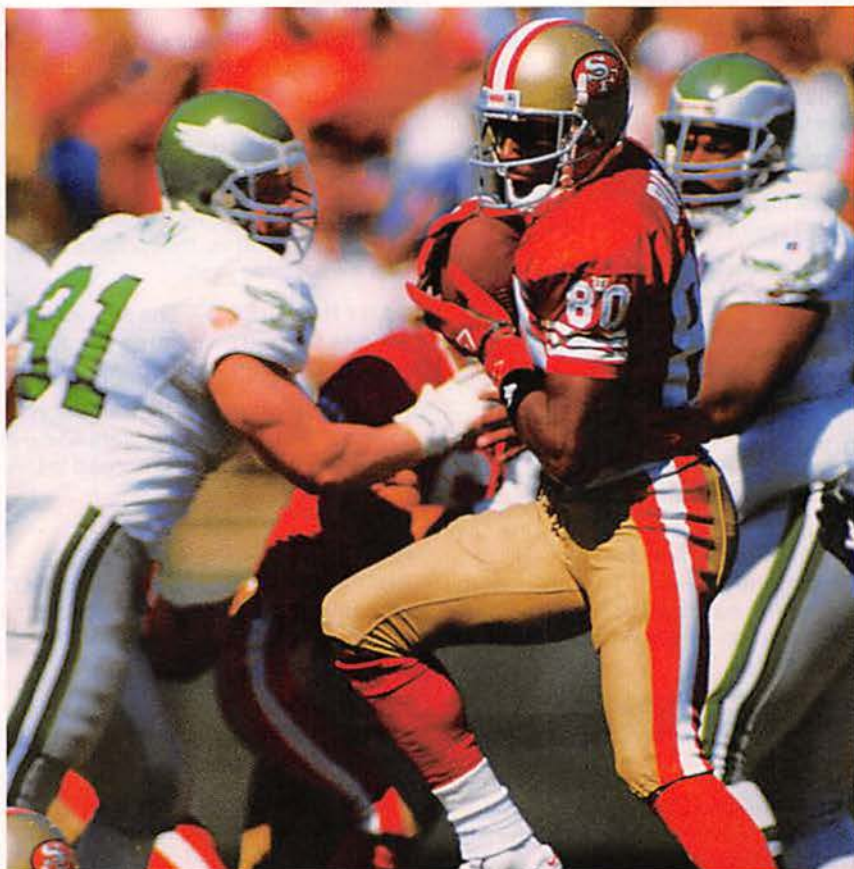
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sport odds

TRENDS AND TIPS FOR
THE '95 SEASON
By Danny Sheridan

NFL BEST BETS



Rice's 49ers have cooked the competition vs. the spread since 1980.

My thanks to coach George Siefert, Steve Young, Jerry Rice and the rest of the 49ers for making us look like prophets. We predicted that the Niners would end up with the best record straight up and vs. the point spread last season, a forecast that held true: The Niners were a league-best 13-3 straight up and tied for league honors with an 11-5 (69 percent) record vs. the spread.

ON THE MONEY

The reader was urged to wager on Seattle as an underdog at home, where the 'Hawks were a perfect 3-0 vs. the points. We weren't

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perfect, however. Washington, we figured, would prosper vs. the spread, but the 'Skins were 6-10 against the points.

EXPANSION

The NFL has expanded for the first time since 1976, when Seattle and Tampa Bay underwhelmed their fans and financial supporters by going a combined 2-26 straight up and 8-18-2 (31 percent) vs. the points. Will the expansion Jacksonville Jaguars and Carolina Panthers have just as difficult a time? My feeling is that they'll definitely have losing records straight up, but they'll be respectable against the spread. Why? Two words: free agency!

NIGHT MOVES

Since the inception of Monday Night Football in 1970, the MNF home team has been the best bet in football, winning 62 percent of the time vs. the spread and 65 percent vs. the spread over the past four years. Last year, MNF home teams went 10-6-1 against the points.

OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE OPENERS

Kansas City is a whopping 11-1 (92 percent) in Week 1 of the season over the last dozen years vs. the spread. In contrast, Cincinnati is 3-9 (25 percent) kicking off the year against the points.

DOMESTIC HYPE

Over the years, we've all heard about how dome teams have such a huge advantage at home. Hype or hip? I say hype. Over the last 13 years, only the Seahawks have been money makers. The seven dome teams are a combined 68-93-4 at home vs. the spread, an incredibly poor winning percentage of 42.

HOT TIPS

NFC EAST

ARIZONA—The Cardinals are 15-8-1 (65 percent) vs. the points against the NFC West over the past eight seasons.

DALLAS—Over the past 20 years, the Cowboys are 13-5-2 (72 percent) vs. the Giants at home against the spread.

N.Y. GIANTS—They're 11-3 (79 percent) against the spread vs. Washington since 1988.

PHILADELPHIA—The Eagles have gone 14-4 vs. AFC teams as road underdogs against the spread since 1980.

WASHINGTON—The Redskins are 32-17 (65 percent) as underdogs vs. the point

spread on grass over the last 20 years. Go with the 'Skins as home 'dogs all season.

NFC CENTRAL

CHICAGO—The Bears have gone 23-7 (77 percent) vs. Tampa Bay against the spread since 1980.

DETROIT—The Lions have gone 11-5-1 (69 percent) against the spread in their first road game of the season.

GREEN BAY—The Packers are 20-10 (67 percent) against Minnesota vs. the points over the last 15 years.

MINNESOTA—Has lost 10 of last 12 both straight up and against the spread to AFC teams.

TAMPA BAY—The Bucs have gone 25-35 (42 percent) vs. the spread as home favorites since coming into the league in '76.

NFC WEST

ATLANTA—The Falcons have gone 12-0 as underdogs against the Saints in the Superdome over the last dozen seasons!

CAROLINA—Will go about 4-12 straight up and 7-9 vs. the spread in its first season.

NEW ORLEANS—The Saints have gone 8-16 (33 percent) vs. the spread at home over the last three years.

SAN FRANCISCO—The Niners have gone 144-98 (60 percent) vs. the spread since 1980, best in the NFL over that span.

ST. LOUIS—No wonder the Rams wanted to move to St. Louis. They were 43-56-5 (43 percent) against the spread in L.A. since 1982.

AFC EAST

BUFFALO—The Bills have gone 11-1 (92 percent) vs. the Colts as home favorites over the past 13 years.

INDIANAPOLIS—The Colts have gone 23-30 (43 percent) as underdogs vs. the spread over the last four years. Look for a reversal of that trend.

MIAMI—The Dolphins have gone 17-4 (81 percent) vs. the spread as underdogs vs. the AFC over the last 18 years.

NEW ENGLAND—Under Bill Parcells, the Pats have gone 13-6 vs. the spread (68 percent) during his two-year tenure. Look for the trend to continue.

N.Y. JETS—They're 25-49-4 (34 percent) as favorites since 1984. Don't look for that record to improve any this year.

AFC CENTRAL

CINCINNATI—The Bengals have gone 10-5-2 (67 percent) against the spread at home vs. Houston over the last 17 years.

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CHEVY TRUCKS



CLEVELAND—The Browns have gone 2-12 (15 percent) vs. the Broncos against the spread in their last 14 meetings.

HOUSTON—Had the best spread record in the league at 12-4 two years ago. Last year, the Oilers went 3-12-1.

JACKSONVILLE—It says here the Jags will be 6-10 straight up and 9-7 vs. the spread in their inaugural season.

PITTSBURGH—Has the best home record against the spread in the NFL since 1982, going 57-41-6 (58 percent).

AFC WEST

DENVER—Since 1985, the Broncos are 12-1 as home underdogs vs. the spread.

KANSAS CITY—The Chiefs have gone 24-3 (89 percent) as home underdogs over the last 24 years, best in the NFL.

LOS ANGELES—The Raiders are 14-4 (78 percent) vs. the spread to open the season over the last 18 years.

SAN DIEGO—The Chargers were 5-0 vs. the point spread as road underdogs last season. Over the last eight years, they're 34-17-5 (67 percent) as road 'dogs vs. the spread.

SEATTLE—The 'Hawks have gone 18-6 (75 percent) against division opponents as home underdogs since 1984. ★

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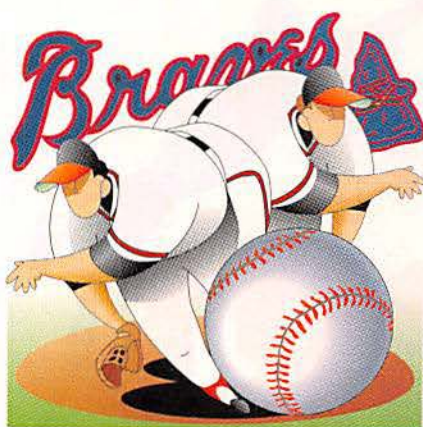
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NOTEWORTHY NUMBERS AND STAT ODDITIES By Dan Gordon



Highest number of wins by a major-league pitcher in the 1990s, entering the '95 season: 86 (Braves' Greg Maddux)

Second-highest win total over the same period: 85 (Braves' Tom Glavine)

Behind Cal Ripken Jr.'s 2,009, longest active consecutive-games streak entering this season, by the Marlins' Jeff Conine: 277

Homers by Cecil Fielder from 1990 to 1994, most in the American League: 188

1990s round-trippers by Barry Bonds (entering this season), most in the National League: 175

Fielder's RBI total for the decade's first

five years, AL's best: 596

Bonds' NL-best RBI total for the same period: 537

Paul Molitor's AL-high hit total for 1990-1994: 896

Brett Butler's NL-best hit output for the same period: 857

Don Mattingly's career at-bats entering '95, most among active players who have never appeared in a postseason game: 6,545

Consecutive 30-homer seasons by Braves' Fred McGriff: 8

Consecutive 100-RBI campaigns for Blue Jays' Joe Carter: 6

Consecutive years in which Padres' Tony Gwynn has hit .300 or better: 12

Lowest RBI output in Eddie Murray's 18-year career—produced in last year's strike-shortened season: 76

Number of players who had caught more than 110 passes in an NFL season prior to 1994: 1

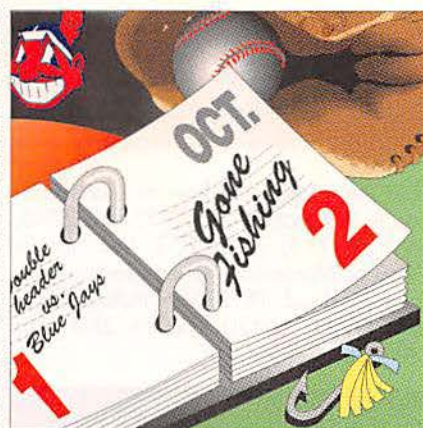
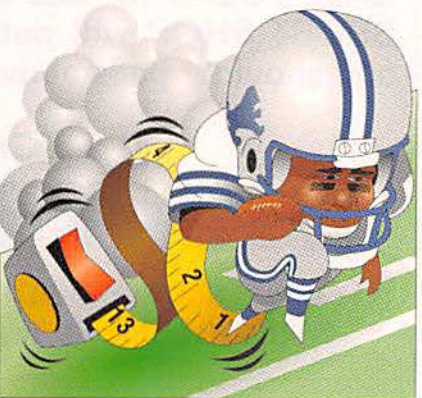
Players with 110 or more receptions in 1994: 3

Players selected ahead of Joe Montana in the 1979 NFL draft: 81

Draft choices (in the second and fourth rounds, along with cash) received by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in exchange for Steve Young in a 1987 trade with San Francisco: 2

Number of rushes of at least 60 yards in the 1994 NFL season: 9

Number of those by Barry Sanders: 6



Years since the Cleveland Indians participated in postseason play, the majors' longest such drought: 41

Age of the youngest active player who started this season with 200 career homers: 29 (Ruben Sierra)

Ken Griffey Jr.'s age at the end of this season: 25

HRs Griffey needs this season to reach 200: 28

Age of the youngest active player with 300 HRs at the start of this season: 34 (Cal Ripken Jr.)

Griffey's age upon hitting his 300th homer if he averages 32 a year for the next four seasons: 28

Number of active pitchers entering 1995 who have taken part in a no-hitter (as either a starter or reliever): 27

Number of active pitchers entering '95 who had pitched in two no-hitters: 1

Career win total going into this season of Braves' Kent Mercker, who pitched the first six innings of a no-hitter in 1991 and a complete-game no-hitter in 1994: 24

Years since someone other than Nolan Ryan hurled a second complete-game no-hitter of his career: 12 (Bob Forsch, in 1983)

No-hitters thrown in the 1980s: 13

No-hitters in the first half of the '90s: 23 ★



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getting harder for smokers to grab a quick bite.
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15 mg "tar," 1.1 mg nicotine av. per cigarette.